WOMEN IN MODERN BRITISH DRAMA: A STUDY OF THE SELECTED PLAYS OF JOHN OSBORNE, ARNOLD WESKER DORIS LESSING AND CARYL CHURCHILL

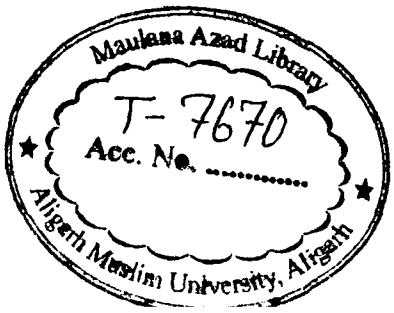
THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
ENGLISH

BY
BHAGWANT KOUR

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

PROF. S.N.H. JAFRI

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH &
MODERN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES
JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA
NEW DELHI
2007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I hereby declare that the research work embodied in the thesis, "Women in Modern British Drama: A Study of the Selected Plays of John Osborne, Arnold Wesker, Doris Lessing and Caryl Churchill" has been carried out by me is an original work and has not been submitted to any university or institution for any purpose.

Bhagwant Kour,

Jamia Millia Islamia,

New Delhi-110025.

JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA
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Department of English & Modern European Languages
Maulana Mohammed Ali Jauhar Marg, New Delhi-110025
Tel. : 26981717, Ext. : 2950, 2952 Website : http://jmi.nic.in

S.N.H.Jafri
PROFESSOR

January 03, 2007

Certificate

I am glad to be able to certify that the Ph.D thesis entitled "Women in Modern British Drama: A Study of Selected Plays of John Osborne, Arnold Wesker, Doris Lessing and Caryl Churchill", submitted by Ms. Bhagwant Kour is an original research work of the scholar and is, in my opinion, suitable for submission to the examiners for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

Further certified that this work has been done under my supervision.

S. N. Jafri

Prof.S.N.H.Jafri,

Supervisor.

Head
Department of English & Modern European Languages
Jamia Millia Islamia
Maulana Mohd. Ali Jauhar Marg
New Delhi-110025

PREFACE

Feminism as a theory, has always interested me. The way the matrilineal society of early civilization, where a central place was given to woman and all that she stood for- nature, love, care nurture, etc, was replaced by the patriarchal setup and so-called male values of success, competition, property and power, has never failed to arouse my curiosity. It was this interest of mine, that prompted me to take up the present study. Drama a genre involves people. The themes and the questions posed by a particular play are fresh and uppermost in the audience's mind when they step out of the theatre. The relationship of a play with the dominant culture in which it intervenes, becomes important and automatically generates discussions. 'Gender' is a crucial issue in any play, as important as the class, race, geographical location, and its action. It affects the focus of the play, its narrative drive, its representational priorities and above all, its themes and meanings. Hence drama becomes a powerful medium when any social change is to be envisioned.

I fall short of words in expressing sincerest regards and deep sense of gratitude and indebtness to Prof. S.N.H. Jafri, for his invaluable guidance, insight, support, patience and thought- provoking suggestions, that he provided right from the conception to the

completion of this thesis. This work would not have been possible without his valuable suggestions and constant encouragement.

I find it worth mentioning here the invaluable help I received from the libraries like the British Council Library, the Sahitya Academy and Dr. Zakir Hussain Library. The staff was very supportive and constantly helped me in the procurement of books and relevant material.

My gratitude also extends to the Board of Studies, Dept. of English for admitting me to the Ph.D. Programme and making this research possible.

I also take immense pride in mentioning my parents who have always been a great source of strength to me and to whom I owe everything.

My deep felt thanks also extend to my family for their faith in me and their untiring support. My husband Dr. Gurpreet, was a constant inspiration and I cannot thank him enough for his positive outlook and reassuring attitude. He was always available whenever I needed his presence. I thank my daughters Gunika and Bhavika for they were ready to excuse their mother when their time was slyly stolen away by this research.

Last but not the least, the role of my friends has been crucial for egging me on in moments of despair. I especially would like to mention Dr. KumKum Yadav with whom I had innumerable healthy discussions and who was always ready with her positive comments and brilliant insights. Thank you so much for being there.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

I

Place of women in Drama

In England drama had its origin in religion as in Greece and many other countries. It sprang from church service just as ancient Greek tragedy had sprung out of the ceremonial worship of Dionysus. In the beginning drama was resented by the church and all along the Dark Ages no record of any dramatic activity is present. Only in the ninth century there were tropes to ecclesiastical music and they sometimes assumed a dialogue form. Then came the miracle and the mystery plays which then gave rise to the interlude and from that the regular drama of the Elizabethan age took its origin.

Till very recently the concept of the imperative of gender has been absent from dramatic criticism, yet ironically the relationship between gender and drama has been a controversial issue from the very beginning of theatre.

Women were not allowed to perform on the stage in the miracles or the moralities, neither in the Greek drama nor in the Shakespeare's times. It was not thought proper for her to appear in such a state in public. When female characters were to be enacted, they were performed by men dressed up as women. This was a direct outcome of social and political power being primarily in the hands of men, with concomitant taboos against women appearing in public, outside the confines of family life. Not much is known about the condition of women of those times. We do not have any written record as how they lived and how much real space was assigned to them. Like Virginnia Woolfe, we can only puzzle over the question as to why no woman wrote a word of "that extra ordinary literature when every other man seemed capable of song or sonnet."[1] Woman it seems, had no recognized rights and her only purpose in life was to get married to the man her parents had chosen and thereafter her sole purpose was to bear children. She could not take on public roles in either politics or religion. It was believed that only men could communicate with Gods. She was officially excluded from theatre and from other such arts such as religious music. "In drama she was considered immoral if she

appeared on stage until recently the term 'actress' and 'whore' were considered to be almost 'synonymous'"[2] There were a few exceptions of course: women took part in folk drama and were involved in Commedia Dell'Arte family troupes of the Renaissance. One also finds record of the tenth century nun Hrosvitha.

Shakespeare with his extraordinary genius for portraying human behavior depicted women within a patriarchal system, but he also created women characters who in their richness, transcend the limitations of the time. His women transcended the role of the loving subservient wife. In fact they are just the opposite. Shakespeare gave his female characters more complex, in-depth personas than that of the subordinate wife. The most vital issue Shakespeare addressed in doing this was how these women identified with the dual roles of the loving, docile wife and the free-thinking, self-motivated individual. Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth, Rosalind, "do not seem to be lacking in personality and character."[3] Paradoxically in real life her condition remained pitiable. "Imaginatively she is of the highest importance, practically she is completely insignificant. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in life she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell and was the property of her husband."[4] This paradox where woman could hardly

step out of the house in life, whereas on the stage equal and ever surpass men has never been explained and remains a mystery.

On the stage, roles played by women in theatre (by young boys of course) could be typically categorized into one of these categories: ingénue (such as Shakespeare's Ophelia) matriarch (such as Lady Macbeth) or servant (such as Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*). These roles fitted the roles that women played in Elizabethan society. A woman had no legal power to herself and all the rights over her laid in either her father or her husband. This seems an odd juxtaposition considering that it was a female sitting on the throne. Except for Shakespeare, other playwrights viewed women solely as plot devices to lead support to the male lead. Very few women characters in Elizabethan drama exerted power, independence or free will and of those that did, most befell tragedy in the end such as John Webster's Duchess of Malfi.

In 1660, when Charles II was restored to the English throne, one major reform he brought about was that he reopened the theatre. Influenced by what he had seen in the French court of Louis XIV, he allowed women to appear on the stage for the first time. This was the most important and groundbreaking innovations of the Restoration stage, opening the world of theatre not only for actresses, but for women as managers and playwrights as well.

This invasion of women on the stage was also because of non- availability of trained boy actors due to the banning of theatre. It was not without its repercussions though. Ironically this veritable line-up of actresses proved to be a veritable line-up of would-be mistresses for the upper class gentlemen. More Davis and Nell Gwyn even got so far as to become the mistresses of Charles II himself[3]. It was reported that some other actresses could even have been spies. In fact in the turbulent British social world, an acting career became attractive to women whose main concern was the acquisition of a rich husband or a keeper. But they still received lesser pay than their male equivalents. The benefits did not stop at actresses. Many women took to managing the theatre companies with or after the death of their husbands. The Dorset Garden Theatre under the management of Lady Henrietta Maria Davenant was the most successful theatre company in London.[6] Female playwrights too emerged that included Aphra Behn, Mary Pix, Catharine Trotter and Delariviere Manley.

In male written Restoration comedy, women were objectified. The new comedy of manners heavily featured almost stock characters, stereotyping women into few categories. But while the male playwrights did take into account the new station of women, it seems as if they didn't quite know how to find the middle ground and in some cases, made the characters "almost bipolar in relation to each

other"[7] In the Comedy of Manners, the chief characters are usually members of high society. "It tends to feature recurring types-the graceful young rake, the faithless wife, the deceived husband and perhaps a charming young heroine who is to be bestowed in the end to the rake."[8] An independent female character could be seen off and on, but she was almost balanced out by being so witty that she almost came across as bitter. In comedies 'the newly enlightened woman' also was mocked at.

The new roles for women in theatre however were not reflective of the new roles for women in society and culture. Women were still expected to live under the laws of their father or husband and women's growing awareness of their limitations and their aspirations for more freedom in expression did not translate into a change of female legal status until the following century. Although philosophers like Hobbes were talking about self interest and individualistic rights, these philosophies very rarely made it to practice for the average Restoration woman. Playwrights like Catharine Trotter and Delariviere Manley did introduce strong intelligent heroines in their works. Aphra Behn is considered the first woman in England to make her living solely by writing. As a middle class widow, she turned to plays as a means to support herself and repay her debts. In *The Rover* she presented the most independent female character seen till that time and who still reads as an almost contemporary figure. Thus some

limitations notwithstanding, restoration theatre was a breakthrough for women as actresses, managers and playwrights.

In what is called the British Romantic era, the contribution of women as female playwrights, actors, translators and critics cannot be overlooked though it has often been marginalized. This was an age of prominent theatre women like Elizabeth Inchbald, Joanna Baille, Sarah Siddons among others. Like Hannah Cowley whose comedy *The Runaway* in 1776, Hanna More's tragedy *Percy* in 1777 and Sophis Lee's comedy *The Chapter of Accidents* in 1780 were all runaway successes. Also there was the rise of female controlled theatre spaces in the first four decades after 1800. Indeed the 1770s are particularly significant because there was a shift in perception of female actors as less sexually suspect.

In Victorian period there was a lot of discussion about the role of women both inside their homes and outside. This was what the Victorians called "the Woman Question". The extension of franchise by the Reforms Bills of 1832 and 1867 stimulated discussion of women's political rights. Although women in England did not get the right to vote until 1918, petitions to parliament advocating women's suffrage were introduced as early as 1840s. Equally important was the agitation to allow married women to own and handle their own

property, which culminated in the passing of Married Women's Property Acts (1870-1908)

The Industrial Revolution resulted in changes for women as well. Lower class women started working in factories and this new kind of labour and poverty that arose with the Industrial Revolution presented a challenge to traditional ideas of woman's place. Ironically, Queen Victoria, the matriarch of the Victoria era, was no supporter of women's rights issues. She symbolized Duty, Family and Propriety and those who did not convey these foundational principles of the times were denounced for their "mad, wicked folly."[11]

Women in Victorian Theatre had to be a monster and an angel both at the same time. In the Victorian era, the theatre was a way in which women could survive. It gave them the freedom to live their own lives. They did not have to subjugate themselves to a man or be at the mercy of their lovers. The greatest part about being on stage was the attention. In those days, women were meant to be seen and not heard. However when women were on stage, everyone listened. Sure, they were playing a part written by a male, but they had the power to convey those ideas in ways that people would listen. A great performance was measured by the silence of the audience or the sound of their weeping. This power that they held over their audience was both magical and frightening. Men often left a performance feeling

mixed emotions. On the one hand, they had been incredibly moved by the performance, even to the point of tears, on the other hand, it was a woman that had such control over them, and that was a frightening realization. After years of seeing men playing women roles, hearing a woman speak and watching her move, was shocking to most. Some actresses held such a commanding presence and got so involved in their characters that it led some critics to be uncomfortable. Max Beerbohm, one such critic, felt this uneasiness from Eleonora Duse, a popular actress of the time. As they saw these women act, they feared that gender roles and social codes were being jeopardized before their very eyes. Indeed, women were changing some standards. Many actresses chose not to marry or have children for the sake of their careers. Ellen Terry, one of the highest paid actresses of the time, said "I don't see how you can rock the cradle, rule the world, and play Ophelia perfectly, all in the day's work."[iv] Those who did marry were expected to give up their lives on the stage and to be subject to their husband's will. In a play called *Merely Players*, the heroine describes an actress' marriage as marrying into a new role in a different kind of drama which is domestic life. Acting is a time consuming occupation, and sometimes it consumed the actress until she didn't know where the character ended and she began. Women immersed themselves into their character with daring abandon. In the Victorian period, men were not the only ones cross-dressing. Women sometimes played male roles, usually by their own choice. They believed that male characters offered

a more challenging role and allowed them to expand their range. Men approved of this cross-dressing for artistic purposes, and liked it as long as they could see the woman inside the man. However, they drew the line when women closely resembled men. Men felt that women were denying their identity and femininity by totally immersing themselves into their character. These were just some of the problems that actresses had to endure in the Victorian period. As time went by, they began to exercise more control over their lives. Some even went on to own their own playhouses and write their own plays.

The twentieth century opened with the Edwardian period and the Georgian period. Many social and aesthetic changes were already marking the passing of the Victorian era. There were many educational reforms that increased literacy and the feminist movement gained ground. J.S.Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) had earlier swept the masses consciousness and became the bible of feminism. Mill had strongly advocated woman's right to vote. As a result, woman's suffrage societies sprang up all over Europe and the United States. The foundation of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies in London in 1897 intensified the agitation for Women's suffrage in the parliament and outside. The English Prime Minister Asquith in 1917 hence, had to enfranchise women.

The fight for suffrage was the first step towards women's fight for equality and its triumph signified a step forward in the realisation of its goals. Next, feminists insisted that men and women are identical in capacities and responsibilities and also rejected the idea that there were distinct male and female sphere. What they demanded next was equality in the Church, state and family. In 1898 Gilman in her treatise *Women and Economics* voiced the opinion that house was nothing more than a prison that confined women and forced upon them the role of a servant. She believed that it was woman's economic dependence on men that created the chains of servitude. Freedom, she said, could come only if wives and daughters went out into the world to earn for themselves. Work, she believed was the "essential process of human life" and until women entered the field they would remain 'near-sighted', 'near-minded' and 'inferior'.

The twentieth century thus saw more women invading the universities, medical profession, law, engineering and other professions that were previously reserved for men. *The Natural Superiority of Women* became a best seller in 1953; it soon became clear that the woman's voice was not a voice in wilderness. A trend was soon gaining ground that everything a man can do, a woman can do better. Another major influence on literature of the twentieth century was World War II. After the war, a large number of women continued to work. But the emphasis still was on conventions whereby the domestic

maintenance was done by women and the structural maintenance by men. The horrors of the war and the utter meaninglessness of human existence was brilliantly expressed in a class of drama known as 'theatre of the absurd'. Then came the group of angry young men, and women writing was marginalized by this 'renaissance'.

However an important outcome of the twentieth century was the emergence of feminist theatre that was a direct result of the feminist movement. That it failed to be hugely popular was because it is categorized as being exclusively by, about and for women. Feminist theatre allows the audience to identify with the dramatic action through the shock of emotional and personal recognition and in the process implement a social change. Their goal therefore was not to entertain, but to improve the quality of life in the society. It sought to demythologize the myth that man is the universal representative of humanity and woman is the unnamed and the invisible. Gradually feminist theatre has grown in importance and its relevance has been positively viewed. But this development is slow. Traditional theatre, dominated by male characters, gives little thought to an accurate portrayal of the female experience.

Though some plays have major female roles, the fact that they focus on women does not necessarily mean that they provide an accurate and balanced picture of women. The first play to exhibit

feminist characteristics was perhaps Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. At the end of the play, Nora decides to leave her husband and children as she reaches the conclusion that the loss of self worth is not an acceptable price to pay. Her slamming of the door was a shock that was "heard around the world". To an audience in 1879, such feminist action was almost incomprehensible and consequently the play was banned in many countries. Interestingly, Nora continues to shock even the modern audiences.

In conclusion, feminist theatre is important for the simple fact that never before has there been a theatre movement led by women. It is important also because it presents truthful images of women and the women's experience through a growing body of drama which specifically focuses on women. Feminist literature in general and feminist theatre in particular has yet to realise their goals. But it has done a major job in raising consciousness in gender-related issues. It has also helped to demythologize the myths that had since ages helped patriarchy to extend its influence. And the first task before them today is to prevent patriarchs from getting away with their habitual tricks of silencing the opposition. Struggle over meaning of the sign is to be made.

II

In the second half of the twentieth Century, many different types of plays came up – the Kitchen sink drama, Neo-realistic drama, Absurd drama, Comedy of menace, Dark Comedy, Drama of Cruelty, etc.

The new drama in England began with John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* which was an outstanding success and the date of the first night of the performance of the play, i.e. 8th May 1956, is recorded as a landmark in modern theatre. The hero was believed to be voicing the protest of the angry young men of the period. It was thought to reflect the contemporary frustrations of the youth of the fifties. The labour Government of 1945, the boom of a classless form of science and technology-all these had seemed to promise a post-war, class-free

Britain. But things did not reach the desired end. The labour Government soon fell, Atlee became an Earl and the Establishment could be seen refurbishing its image. All this naturally bred anger, depression and frustration. *Look Back in Anger* and other plays of the period were seen to be reflecting all this.

However in the 1950s and 1960s there was also tension with regard to sexual mores. The two world wars had a strong impact on the social and the economic sphere. The collapse of the war economy meant the incidence of unemployment on a mammoth scale. Another impact that the war had was not very apparent. It was successful in demytholizing the myth of established gender roles. With their men away in war, women also had to take up the role of the bread earner in addition to looking after the family. The men in the army, on the other hand, did all the jobs that in the peacetime would have been done by women. All this served to crumble the age old myth of the established gender roles whereby women were expected to stay inside their homes and men were expected to go out and earn. With this, a redefining and rejigging of the gender roles took place. As the war came to an end, the women were not willing to give up their jobs and refused to revert back to their homes.

A consciousness had already taken root in society with Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication for the Rights of Women* and J. S.

Mill's *The Subjection of Women*. This consciousness materialized in some achievements for women. Women got the right to vote, the right to abortion, the right to property etc. But much remained to be done. All the aspirations and frustrations of 1950s got reflected in the drama of the period. However, modern British drama does not focus on a single method. Because it has all the tensions and complexities of life of the working class in Britain in 50s and 60s, it is also called the "working class drama."

The voice for the classless form of society, the anger and frustration of the period was noticed by the critics, but the tension between the sexes was largely overlooked. Viewing plays from this point of view, gives new insights into the meaning of the plays since "the gender of a character defines not only his or her biological characteristics, but also implies imaginative and social assumptions about her/his personality, power and place in the world."[11]

This thesis takes up selected plays of four playwrights of Modern British Drama to study the role of women characters in a sexist society. To study the women characters would require studying the men characters as well, in order to reflect on the relationship between the two. It seeks to see how much space has been given to women- whether they are central to the action or marginalized- how much freedom do they enjoy, how much are they able to define their

individual identity and how much say do they have in matters of vital importance. Seeing the plays in the light of questions asked by feminists in recent years can expand "horizons of meaningful aesthetic pleasure and the interpretative possibilities of plays"[12] and in some case enable us to arrive at a more accurate understanding of how exactly ~~how~~ a particular play works.

John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* brought him into prominence overnight. A better understanding of the play ensures once we see it not only as a play that talks of class struggle, but actually a play of war of sexes. In *Dejavu,* a play that Osborne wrote much later, one would have expected Jimmy to have mellowed down a little, but he doesn't. Only this time it is the daughter at the ironing board that symbolizes endless drudgery. He is even more prone to monologues and mounts extensive attacks on feminists and the likes.

Arnold Wesker is generally considered a writer of political action and his plays especially the *Triology* is seen as a play of political struggle. This socialist play becomes more interesting when analyzed to see how much space has been accorded to women in this ambience of struggle for equality.

In Doris Lessing the tension between the two sexes becomes more pronounced and apparent. The female protagonist here finds the role of being a mother increasingly burdensome and alienating.

Caryl Churchill on her part, raises the pertinent feminist question as to what extent can the 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles be compartmentalized. She also has a combination of images of women from the 1950s/60s and a new representation of women. The female protagonist has liberated herself from attributes like dependence, and passivity. She seeks to achieve a mode of behaviour which is predominantly 'masculine'.

Two male and two female playwrights have been taken and the way the women characters are treated at the hands of the two is analyzed.

Notes

1. Virginnia Woolfe, quoted by Sandra M. Gilbert, "A Tarantella of Theory" (Introduction) *The Newly Born Woman*, Trans. Betsy Wing (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975) p.7

2. Hugh Hunt, "Restoration Acting" *Restoration Theatre* (London Edward Arnold ltd., 1965) p.182.

3. Woolfe, op.cit., p.43.

4. Ibid., p.43.

5. Helena Roving, "The Portrayal of Women Roles in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*", *The Sign of Angellica: An Aphra Behn Web site. 2002* Accessed Aug.17, 2005.

6. Ruth Nestvold, "Women in the Theatre after the restoration" Aphra Behn home page. 2000 Accessed Aug 15, 2005

7. Joseph Wood Krutch, *Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration,* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press,1975) p.12.

8. Megan Katovich, "Image of Women in Three Early Eighteenth Century Plays" (http.//nw.uft.edu./women 18.html>) Accessed on Sept 23rd 2004.

9. Ibid., Accessed Sept 23rd 2004.

10. Carl Degler, "Charlotte Perkins Gilman on the Theory and Practice of Feminism".: American Quarterly, viii (Spring 1956), p.24.

11. Michelene Wandor, *Look Back in Gender* (London: Metheun, 1987), p.6.

12. Ibid., p.7.

Osborne and the Marginalized Female

John Osborne heralded a revolution in British Theatre. In 1956 when George Devine placed a notice in *The Stage* stating the requirement of a presentable play, Osborne submitted *Look Back in Anger*. This play was not only staged, but was considered by most critics to be the turning point in post-war British theatre. It evoked diverse responses from critics. To many like Christopher Innes, it was a 'sociological phenomenon'[1]. Milton Shulman in the *Evening Standard* saw it as a play written about a 'love triangle'[2]. Critics like Derek Granger, preferred viewing it as a 'drama based on class conflicts' [3], while many viewed it as the voice of the disillusioned angry youth of the fifties. Howard Brenton, writing in the *Independent* at the time of Osborne's death in 1994, said, "When somebody breaks the mould so comprehensively it's difficult to describe what it feels like"[4]. Osborne's protagonist Jimmy Porter, captured the angry and the rebellious nature of the youth of the times, a dispossessed lot, who were clearly unhappy with the things as they were. He came to represent an entire generation of 'angry young men'.

Interestingly in all the varied responses to the play, too much attention was paid to Jimmy and as a result Alison was more or

less marginalized. Viewed from this angle the play becomes a strong assertion of male-chauvinistic attitude that gives the woman a secondary place and is convinced that that is the right place for her.

The school of theatre that this play belonged to became known as 'Kitchen sink theatre'. The dramatist under the label sought to convey the language of everyday speech and to shock with its bluntness. Michelene Wandor however sees the relationship between sink and psyche as critical to this play as to many others of the time. At one level it is a very clear class statement about the nature of the world represented on stage but on "another level it is the relationship between sink, psyche and gender which is also important. Whose world, dilemmas, emotions, story, is it we are following?"[5]

The three-act play takes place in a one-bedroom flat in the Midlands. Jimmy Porter, lower middle-class, university educated, young man lives with his wife Alison, the daughter of a retired Colonel in British Army in India. His friend Cliff Lewis, who helps Jimmy run a sweet stall, stays with them. Jimmy is intellectually restless, reads the papers, argues and taunts his friends over the acceptance of the world around them. He rages to the point of violence, reserving much of his anger for Alison, her family and friends. The situation is accentuated by the arrival of Helena, an actress friend of Alison's. Appalled at what she finds, Helena calls Alison's father to take her away. He

arrives while Jimmy is visiting the mother of a friend and takes Alison with him. As soon as she is gone, Helena moves in with Jimmy. Alison returns after sometime having lost Jimmy's baby, apologizes and is accepted back.

The setting in *Look Back in Anger* has its own connotations. The 'one room flat'[6] that the Porters live in, not only sheds light to the obvious fact that they cannot afford to live anywhere larger, but as Michelene Wandor suggests it seeks to underline a "hothouse of interpersonal relations", [7] by bringing together in a real and a symbolic way all the different living functions that the conventional family abode would have.

> "It tells us that Jimmy is young and poor, and it shows us literally how all the domestic functions (except lavatory and bathroom) co-exist within one space: eating entertaining and sleeping."[8]

The food cupboard occupies a considerable part of the room. It might have suggested a female forte , but then it is the dominance of a small portable radio blaring loudly that is noticeable. The dining table has three dining chairs but the room has only "two shabby leather armchairs" (I.p.9), the latter number corresponds to the number of men in the house. The third chair is conspicuous by its absence: its absence suggesting the absence of rest and leisure for the woman of the house.

The curtain rises to reveal a Sunday morning. The men- Jimmy and Cliff- are seated in the armchairs, relaxing and reading the papers, for after all it is a Sunday. In contrast, Alison is standing and is working while leaning over an ironing board. Jimmy, aged twenty-five is an educated man who has married a girl from a class above his own, in spite of his prejudice against the middle class. He is a self-pitying and a self-dramatizing youth. T.C.Worsley finds him utterly useless, one 'who can do nothing with his brains and education except rail against what present day life offers him'[9]. He believes the world is out of order, but has neither the will nor the determination to set it right. "The author has written all the soliloquies for his Hamlet and virtually left out all the other characters and all the action." [10] One can see a clear-cut division of labor on the lines of a male-dominated society. Even on Sunday, the woman is expected to work and Alison is seen doing her job as silently and as docile as ever. She goes on with her seemingly inexhaustible ironing.

Then the dress worn is also symbolic. The expensive skirt Alison is wearing is dominated by the 'cherry-red shirt' (I.p.10) of Jimmy's, that she is wearing as the top. Here is Alison ironing one of Jimmy's shirts and wearing another. Immediately she is identified as "'his' working for him, is into his territory and is wearing his clothes"[11] .The play belongs to the group of social-realist plays in which the stage directions played a very important role. The 'cherry-red shirt'

dominates the color setting in the same way that the personality of Alison has been dominated by that of Jimmy's. Though coming from a higher class than her husband, she has moulded herself to fit into his scheme of things. She has grown up with one attitude but has been forced by her situation into another. She is the woman who tolerates Jimmy's invective and lives constantly with the threat of something erupting in front of her. Their marriage all along has been a one-sided compromise and Alison has been paying for it all through. But in spite of all the compromises and submissiveness, she is not absorbed into her husband's value system. He never sees her as one of his own. She stands there as an alienated being, remains an outsider and a hostage from the upper class. She is also the one to receive all the angry tirades against her class. Alison represents what a sexist-biased society calls 'the cult of true womanhood' by which women were expected to have the virtues of piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity.

Alison's subordinate role is confirmed as the play moves. In terms of stage setting, she stands at the extreme left, below the food cupboard. The lights are clearly on Jimmy, who occupies a central position throughout. Though Alison may seem to dominate the action by standing, the real dominance becomes apparent soon. Jimmy speaks more than all the characters put together. The mere emotional intensity of his outbursts is enough to make him carry the scene even though what he says is actually nothing, save hateful abusive utterances, most

unbecoming for a university graduate. Like Derek Granger, we are questioned how "it might be thought impossible that anyone so blatantly loutish as Jimmy could survive as a central figure let alone keep a wife for five years. He is mean, arrogant, self-pitying, cruelly abusive and so utterly disposed to feel injured, that he hardly permits himself two consecutive moments of common civility"[12]. John Osborne himself testified in the Preface to the *Collected Plays* Vol.I that though there are five clearly defined characters on the stage only one is acknowledged as visible.

> The conspiracy had it that Jimmy Porter occupies a vacuum talking without pause to himself. His wife, her father, his temporary mistress, his closest friend, contained no reality, no substance, no impact. Porter was an abortive, loutish Hamlet who has no Gertrude, Claudius, Polonius, Ophelia or even Horatio to distract the eye and ear of those unwillingly gathered to behold his tedious presence."[13]

Jimmy is a rebel in class terms but then so is Alison, who has revolted against her parents to marry a person from the lower strata of society, but here the stage clearly belongs to Jimmy. Not once are we allowed to see or feel Alison's sufferings or her physical and mental trauma and not once are we allowed to see her side of things. She stands marginalized all through.

To a certain extent, critics may be right to see the play as a play of class-conflict, but more clearly it is a play highlighting the conflict between the sexes. Alison epitomizes for Jimmy all that he hates in the upper class but it is not always on the basis of her class that she is attacked. It is her femininity that is the main target. As Michelene Wandor suggested that it was possible for the playwright to choose a man to embody the class conflict, but when the playwright deliberately chooses a woman to serve as a hostage he certainly had something else in mind. "It indicates that the play's primary concern is not class but turmoil in Jimmy's mind about the nature of his masculine identity of which class is but a secondary component."[15]. Alison might belong to a higher class, but Jimmy has constantly to hammer into her, that he is superior because of the sex, which he is born with.

Christopher Innes talks of a symbolic structure beneath the apparent realism of *Look Back in Anger*. He outlines how the four main characters of the play are clearly divided on class lines in which sex equals status. Honest, male protagonist are set against beautiful, but repressed or immoral females, with social conflict represented by the sexual battleground of Jimmy Porter's marriage to the upper class Alison and his seduction of her more self assured counterpart, Helena. Christopher Innes in Modern British Drama feels:

"Society is characterized by Alison's apparent avoidance to commitment, which in Jimmy's view equal an inability to feel emotion"[16].

Throughout Jimmy is a raging pugnacious bore. Not letting a single opportunity of hurting Alison slip by, he constantly showers abuses not only at her, but her whole family in a most distasteful manner. Eric Keown, reviewing the play for *Punch* at the time wrote that Osborne "draws liberally on the vocabulary of the intestines and laces his tirades with the steamier epithets of the tripe butcher"[17] .One is shocked at the choicest abuses reserved for Alison's mother. "...that old bitch should be dead!"(I,i.p.53) and more shocking is the fact that he wants Alison herself to join in the onslaughts:

JIMMY: ...(To Alison) Well? Am I not right?

Cliff and Helena look at Alison tensely, but she just gazes at her plate.

I said she's an old bitch, and should be dead! (II.I.P.53)

It seems as if Jimmy is trying to test the limit of Alison's endurance and patience. And Alison has to undergo this test all through. The stage directions shed light on his desperate attempt to displease and hurt. "*He looks up at both of them for reaction, but Cliff is reading. and Alison is intent on her ironing... He has lost them, and he*

knows it, but he won't leave it" (p.14) "*The tired appeal in her voice has pulled him up suddenly But he soon gathers himself for a new assault.*"(p.19) "*Jimmy is rather shakily triumphant*" (p.21). "*Jimmy watches her waiting for her to break.*"(p.22) "*He can smell blood again and he goes on cheerfully*"(p.55) These stage directions point to his neurotic determination to keep his supremacy. A.E. Dyson believes:

> "His tenderness for his wife is unable to survive the restless suspicions which turn love into conquest, marriage into revenge and the normal reticence of others into insult".

He further traces the condition to the "psychological make-up of a misfit who has the iconoclasm peculiar to that most dangerous type - the frustrated messiah, who because he cannot save the world, comes to feel the desire to destroy it instead."[18]

The failure of Jimmy is his inability to be coherent about his despair. One wonders why a university-educated man is running a sweet stall? Is he capable of doing nothing except ranting. What has made him such a difficult man to live with except that the fact that he saw his father die. We are left to work out our own causes and like Milton Shulman we realise that "futility is our only clue."[19] Ronald Hayman believes that "anger has to be directed against something and if you're angry about something then you are not really angry."[20] Maybe Jimmy wants to shake us into thinking but we are never quite clear what it is he wants us to think about. Is it the class

struggle or simply sex. This incoherence in Jimmy's character leaves one baffled. Osborne's characters are in fact defined by their inability to act. "Since there aren't any good brave causes left social frustration is taken out on personal relationship."[21]. Jimmy is a man who needs a cause. Alison recollects her first impressions of him:

> He'd come to the party on a bicycle, he told me, and there was oil all over his dinner jacket. It had been such a lovely day, and he'd been in the sun. Everything about him seemed to burn, his face, the edges of his hair glistened and seemed to spring off his head and his eyes were so blue and full of the sun... Jimmy went into battle with his axe swinging round his head- frail and so full of fire. I had never seen anything like it. The old story of the knight in shining armour- except that his armour didn't really shine very much.

Jimmy is no doubt displaced, but he also has an enemy in the form of his wife in his camp. That is why he married Alison, seeing her as a challenge and all that followed was revenge. The colonel cannot understand this marriage equation "I always believed that people married each other because they were in love. That always seemed a good reason to me. But apparently, that's too simple for young people nowadays. They have to talk about challenges and

revenge. I just can't believe that love between men and women is really like that..."(II,ii.p.67). And Alison confesses to her father that living with Jimmy had indeed been "a trial" for her. "I've been on trial every day and night of my life for nearly four years."(II,ii.p.67).

Milton Shulman finds the language that Jimmy Porter uses for his wife as one that one would even hesitate to use to the lowest drab of the streets. After four years of marriage he hasn't yet wearied of fuming class consciously against his mother-in-law and gloating over the indigestible feast the worms will have of her.

> "... The trouble is not with the world...but with a playwright who having wit and an obvious turn for forceful writing wastes these gifts on a character who could only be shaken into sense by being ducked in a horse pond or sentenced to a lifetime of cleaning latrines...Jimmy is indeed infatuated with his own voice" [22].

He recognized this for in his last play he described himself as a "churling, grating note a spokesman for no one but myself, with deadening effect, cruelly abusive, unable to be coherent about my despair."[23]

Jimmy and Alison's marriage is in fact a case of those traditional marriages, where wife is never treated as an equal partner and is denied even her individuality. It has been a nightmare for Alison. Immediately after marriage she had to bear not only Jimmy, but also

Hugh, Jimmy's friend, with all their savage mannerisms. She had to live through many moments of agony, embarrassment and emotional torture as Jimmy and Hugh forced themselves with their uncivilized and brutal manners on Alison's friends and relatives: "I felt I'd been dropped in a jungle. I couldn't believe that two people, two educated people could be so savage and so-so uncompromising... They both came to regard me as a hostage from those sections of society they had declared war on."(II, i.P.43)

Jimmy seems to be a true follower of Rousseau's dictum that ~~said that~~ "the first and foremost quality of a woman is gentleness. Made to obey... she ought to suffer even injustice and bear wrongs from a husband without complaining"[24]. In fact violence emerges as another centre-mechanism of patriarchy in terms of formation of gender roles. As Kate Millet argues violence is essentially sexual in its character and it takes the form of aggression, hatred, contempt, wife-beating, rape and the desire to break personality. The rationale underlying this belief is that women are inferior and dangerous. Unless women meet men's needs, they deserve to be punished, ~~to~~ in the most severe degree if necessary:

> Excepting a social licence to physical abuse among certain class and ethnic groups, force is diffused and generalized in most contemporary patriarchies... Before the assault the female is universally defenceless both by

> her physical and emotional training. Needless to say this is the far reaching effect on the social and psychological behavior of both sexes.[25]

Like those patriarchs, Jimmy believes that a husband should at times unfairly accuse his wife. The accusations leveled are many. Alison is mocked at, ridiculed and condemned for almost everything. She is snubbed for not having read the papers, reprimanded for having being born in the upper middle class and scorned at for having the kind of mother that she has:

> Jimmy: My God, those worms will need a good dose of salts the day they get through her! Oh what a bellyache you've got coming to you, my little wormy ones! Alison's mother is on the way! *(In what he intends to be a comic declamatory voice)* She will pass away, my friends, leaving a trail of worms gasping for laxatives behind her- from purgatives to purgatory.
>
> (II, i. P.53)

It is surprising that given Jimmy's passion for invective, how he manages to sell any sweets. He is a mixture of an exhibitionist and a sadist. Not only is he extra-vocal about his inconsequential anger,

but he wants to be heard too. This is so because he wants to be convinced that his bullets have found their mark and have not been wasted. Any doubt in that hurts his ego and he returns to hit all the more savagely:

> JIMMY: ... You can talk, can't you? You can express an opinion, or does the White woman's burden make it impossible to think?
>
> Alison: I'm sorry. I wasn't listening properly.
>
> JIMMY: You bet you were not listening. Old Porter talks and everyone turns over and goes to sleep. And Mrs. Porter gets 'em all going with the first yawn
>
> (I, i. p.11)

Demanding an answer when there isn't any and prodding the other person to talk while never giving her a chance to, is simply another way of torture. And it is this torture that Jimmy is so good at inflicting. One can never be sure whether his anger with Alison starts in a genuine desire to save her or is because of an ugly type of possessiveness.For Jimmy, Alison is an enemy and therefore anything associated with her becomes a natural object to attack. On hearing that

Helena is coming to stay with them, his quick retort is, "One of her old friends. And one of my natural enemies.' (I,i. p.35).

The great question that keeps looming is, what does Jimmy want after all. One could have sided with him if all he was demanding was a "little animation"(p.14) if what he wanted was simply to make people get up from their "delicious sloth"(p.15), if he was just bothered about "youth slipping away"(p.15) or if he wanted people to be "enthusiastic about something"(p.15).But his barbs are issueless. Indeed he is a "tiresome young man"(p.50) with the sole purpose of being unpleasant and worst of all is his deliberate attempt to do so. As Michelene Wandor puts it, "Alison's family represents all that Jimmy despises in a ruling class, which no longer espouses an old-style patriotism, and since that cause is dead, for Jimmy there is no longer any good cause to die for. The anguish is ironic, since while Jimmy may despise their cause, he has none of his own"[26]. And Ronald Hayman avers:

> "Not that 'anger' is really the right word. Osborne used it in his title and it had come to stay. It was a catchphrase for a long time ... Jimmy is himself negative in that he has no alternatives to offer. He'd like to see things changed but he has no ideas about what they ought to be changed to. Osborne is no latter day Shaw with a program of social reforms. His basic feeling seems to be that if there aren't any good brave causes left which are worth

> dying for then there can't be any causes that are worth fighting for. This is a romantic and very negative assumption but Osborne manages to lend a positive ring to it and one of the main reasons for Jimmy Porter's popularity has been his success as an embodiment of the man of action who is frustrated because there's nothing he can go into action for- it's very comfortable to identify with him on this score and thousands of people have taken him to their hearts who in ordinary life would find such a man boorish, arrogant and tiresome"[27].

So here was Osborne desperately trying to give a cause to his ranting hero when there was none in sight. This was partially because of his near absolute identification with him. In his autobiography *A Better class of Person* talking of his marriage to Pamela, he quotes one of Jimmy's speech:

> Jimmy: The last time she was in church was when she was married to me. I expect that surprises you, doesn't it? It was expediency, pure and simple. We were in a hurry, you see. *(The comedy of this strikes him at once, and he laughs.)* Yes we were actually in a hurry! Lusting for a slaughter! Well, the local registrar was a particular pal of Daddy's, and we knew he'd spill the beans to the Colonel like a shot. So we had to seek some local vicar

> who didn't know him quite so well. But it was no use. When my best man-a chap I'd met in the pub that morning-and I turned up, Mummy and Daddy were in the church already. They'd found out at the last moment, and had to come to watch the execution carried out. How I remember looking down at them, full of beer for breakfast, and feeling a bit buzzed. Mummy was slumped over her pew in a heap- the noble, female rhino, pole-axed at last! And Daddy... I'm not sure what happened after that. We must have married, I suppose. I think I remember being sick in the vestry."

And then he says, "Apart from the references to Daddy and the Indian Princes, It is a fairly accurate description of our wedding"[28]. Christopher Innes comments: "Pamela's refusal to be drawn was the power of his sphinx paw... Author and protagonist are mirror opposites. Whereas Jimmy mistakes loving selflessness for unfeeling passivity, Osborne interpreted (Pamela's) bland complacency for the complaisance of a generous and loving heart"[29]. Pamela Lane like Alison had become pregnant, suffered an abortion and had left the husband. Her parents just like Alison's had strongly opposed their marriage and as the autobiography says were so disturbed that they

even went so far as to engage a private detective to keep an eye on their son-in-law. These facts taken from his own life, would no doubt prompt the dramatist to identify with his protagonist and the phrase "Angry Young Man" was used to describe both. No wonder then, that Jimmy has his creator's sympathy, whereas Alison is the outsider-never understood and always undercut.

Jimmy wants total allegiance from Alison. Behaving like a child in many ways, he wants total conformity. He wants Alison to stop ironing and all activities to come to a standstill, just because he is tuning his radio. He expects her to applaud when he talks of all the girlfriends he has had. He praises them constantly and condemns her all through.

Repeatedly stressing that he is superior to her has almost become a habit with him. David Hare in "Theatre's great malcontent" tries to defend Jimmy Porter by averring that John's subject is failure and that "John's characters, vibrating with life, have no clue how to put the nightmare away, how to forget it, put a sock in it, repress it or even, for God's sake, how to talk the bloody thing to death. These are people for whom the fear always returns."[30] But David Hare in his brilliant essay failed to see what living with such a character would amount to. Jimmy makes a case of glory for himself out of his father's death and condemns Alison on that score too:

Jimmy: Anyone who's never watched somebody die is suffering from a bad case of virginity.

His good humour of a moment ago deserts him, as he begins to remember.

For twelve months, I watched my father dying- when I was ten years old. He'd come back from the war in Spain, you see. And certain god-fearing gentlemen there had made such a mess of him, he didn't have long left to live. Everyone knew it- even I knew it.

He moves R.

But, you see, I was the only one who cared. *(Turns to the window.)* His family was embarrassed by the whole business. Embarrassed and irritated. *(Looking out)* As for my mother, all she could think was the fact that she had allied herself to a man who seemed to be on the wrong side of things. . . .

. . . You see, I learnt at an early age what it was to be angry-angry and helpless. And I can never forget it. *(sits)* I knew more about- love. . . betrayal. . . and death, when I was ten years old than you will probably ever know all your life.

(II, i.p.58)

Jimmy belongs to the category of men who seek from women much more than they could ever hope to get, and when disappointed turn on them with savage resentment. To him, Alison appeared to have a wonderful relaxation of spirit when he first met her, but it doesn't take him long to be disillusioned. The fault is not Alison's, but his own. It is in not letting her occupy the same pedestal on which he himself stands. She is the sleeping beauty-good-looking, attractive, passive hence sought after, but of no value once won over. "Sweet and sticky on the outside, and sink your teeth in it *(savoring every word)* inside, all white , messy and disgusting."(II, i. p.49) Living with such a man the wife is unable to comprehend what exactly her husband wants:

> "He wants something quite different from us What it is exactly I don't know - a kind of cross between a mother and a greek courtesan, a henchwoman, a mixture of Cleopatra and Boswell..."
> (III, ii. P.91)

In spite of all the verbal onslaughts and the seemingly apparent heroism, there is a fear lurking beneath. Jimmy fears Alison's passion as her passion makes him suspect his own masculine identity:

> "Do you know I have never recognized the great pleasure of lovemaking when I didn't desire it

> myself. Oh, it's not that she hasn't her own kind of passion. She has the passion of a python. She just devours me whole everytime, as if I were some over-large rabbit. That's me. The bulge around her navel- if you're wondering what it is- it's me. Me buried alive down there, and going mad, smothered in that peaceful looking coil. Not a sound, not a flicker from her- she doesn't even rumble a little. You'd think that this indigestible mess would stir up some kind of tremor in those distended, overfed tripes- but not her! She'll go on sleeping and devouring until there is nothing left of me."
>
> (I. p.37)

And then these accusations are generalized, "Why, why, why, why do we let these women bleed us to death?" (P.84).

Ray Huss in "Social Drama as Veiled Neurosis: The Unacknowledged Sadomasochism of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*" traces Jimmy's aberrant behavior and explains it by the unresolved oedipal situation in which he is enmeshed. Jimmy requirement of a "cross between a mother and a Greek courtesan" and his anger and a "feeling of defilement"[31] at Alison being a virgin at the time of their marriage is based on the uneasy feeling that she resembles

the sexually taboo mother-figure than the acceptable courtesan figure. The other side of their ambivalence-his overt attraction to the mother image - is emphasized when Helena is described in the stage directions as having 'matriarchal authority that makes most men who meet her anxious not only to please but to impress' and this figures again when Jimmy becomes so emotionally involved in the death of his friend's mother.

Alongside this fear of sexuality, another fear working deep down in Jimmy's psyche is the fear of motherhood. It brings out all the bestial qualities in him. Sexuality and motherhood are synonymous with femininity and it is this femininity that he fears. Motherhood reminds man of his own incompetence. He cannot create the way a woman can, and since he cannot, he would like to destroy everything that may remind him of his own incompetence. Jimmy's imagery becomes morbid and sickening when he refers to it. It would have been understandable if all he wished was that Alison should have a first hand experience of suffering, as he feels he himself had. She could have suffered by seeing some other form of suffering, but Jimmy most monstrously and heartlessly wishes her (their) child to die:

> "If you could have a child and it would die, let it grow, let a recognizable human face emerge from that little mass of India rubber and wrinkles."(p.37)

and afterwards this callous and unfeeling, husband would like to rejoice experiencing a sadistic pleasure:

> "I want to stand in your tears, and splash about them, and sing. want to be there, when you grovel... I want the front seat."(P.59)

This horrible wish of his looks all the more gruesome, because it comes at a time when Alison is actually pregnant. Later when he is told by Helena of the fact, all he has to say is "I don't care" "I don't care if she's going to have a baby. I don't care if it has two heads!"(P.73). However he does care enough to see it dead and then like a sadist wants to splash in it and laugh and enjoy himself. She is allowed to be motherly but she can be motherly but only to him.

In a marriage like Jimmy's and Alison's, one person always stands at the receiving end. The ideas, the ideals and the actions of one are always seen to be correct and those of the other as wrong. Psychologically viewed, it is the concept of the 'self' and the 'other' or 'projection' as it is called, that is operative between them. It is the concept of viewing the second person as 'the other'. 'The other' is seen as different in every way. According to David Holbrook in *Images of Woman in Literature*:

> Projection is a way of defending the ego against unconscious impulses, affects and perceptions that we fear will be painful if admitted in full awareness. We deny recognition of these

internal elements and perceive them as originating outside ourselves. ...Whenever our harmony is threatened and the frightening impulses to hate become disturbing, we are liable to expel these and to asc.ibe them to other persons or to causes external to ourselves. To some extent we treat the other person as a blank screen onto which we can cast various aspects of our personalities that we somehow cannot yet consciously acknowledge"[34].

David Carins and Shaun Richards in "No Good Brave Causes" write "Women are a threatening 'other' in the face of which the male must to generate his own security, exercise the ultimate sanctions of repression and the denial of the independent female subject. In terms of colonial discourse Jimmy's practice is a model of what Homi Bhabha defines as standard in this 'apparatus of power'. The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonised as a population of degenerate types--- in order to justify conquest and to establish system of administration and instruction"[35].

Shoshana Felman in *"Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy"* (1975) uses Jacques Derrida's analysis of the way that oppositional thinking dominates western culture. She raises questions as to how things are understood in relation to their opposites and how hierarchy is imposed upon the resulting oppositions for example Man/

woman, sane/insane, speech/silence, same/other. Thus woman becomes the man's "'other' and is therefore what he is not -insane and silent"[34]. Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* asserts that assent to the ideological aspect of patriarchy is obtained through the socialization of both sexes to basic patriarchal principles regarding the gender roles:

> "Status is a persistent affirmation of the belief in male superiority and guarantees the superior status of male over the female. Perceptions of temperament, which involve the formation of human personality along stereotyped lines of sex category ('masculine' and 'feminine') are based on the needs and the modes of the dominant group and they are dictated by what its members appreciate in themselves and find convenient in subordinates aggression, intelligence force and efficiency in the male and passivity, ignorance, docility, virtue and incompetence in the female"[35].

This can however create serious problems and consequences in marriage such as that of Jimmy and Alison's, when one starts seeing the partner as the cause of tension and worse still when one starts believing that if only the other would change, harmony would be restored. "One thereby protects one's own self-image as good, free of negative reactions and troublesome attitudes. One does so by projecting the bad onto the other"[36].

For Jimmy, Alison is 'the other'. That is why he keeps snubbing her so as to keep his own identity intact. He imposes his own infirmities on to her and then believes them to be hers. He sees her as a "sycophantic, phelgmatic and pussillanimous"(p.21), her ways are seen as "destructive". Her sitting at the dressing table is viewed as a kind of butchery:

> "Did you see some dirty old Arab, sticking his fingers into some mess of lamb fat and gristle? Well, she's just like that... Those primitive hands would have your guts out in no time"(p.24).

Nowhere in the play however has Alison shown such attributes. On the other hand, it is Jimmy himself who is violent, abusive and blustering. He cannot even think of creating. His morbid imagery can only concentrate on destroying. He accuses Alison's mother of spying on him, but that is exactly what he does when he rummages his wife's handbag, drawers and reads her letters. Talking of his own wife Pamela, he says in his autobiography "I watched her eating, walking, bathing, making-up, dressing, undressing, my curiosity was insatiable. Seeing her clothes lying around the floor(she was hopelessly untidy, in contrast to my own spinsterish habits), I was captive, even to the contents of her open handbag and the few possessions she had brought

with her"[34] Ann Belford Ulanov in her book *Receiving Woman: Studies in the Psychology and Theology of the Feminine* points out to a certain underlying problem behind wife-beating. She says:

> "In case of wife-beating we see projection working in its most primitive form. There the husband projects onto the wife fearful images in himself that he violently repudiates. He then punishes her for having them while indulging those impulses in himself in the beating - process"[37].

Jimmy thus seriously suffers from this disorder.

Jimmy is a thorough male- chauvinist and therefore it is the whole female sex that becomes his target. The male friends of Alison, Webster for example, are more easily accepted that her female friends. The spouse's mother is more of a target than her father is. He talks of the "eternal flaming racket of the female".

> I had a flat underneath a couple of girls once. You heard every damned thing those bastards did, all day and night. The simplest, everyday actions were a sort of assault course to our sensibilities. With those two, even a simple visit to the lavatory sounded like a medieval siege ... Slamming their doors, stamping their heels, banging their irons and saucepans...
>
> (I. p.24-25)

But all through he is the one who makes all the din and all the clamor. Above all there are no reasons in the play that warrant such provocation. Ray Huss avers: "There is nothing strindbergian in such misogyny because unlike a Strindberg play *Look Back in Anger* provides no dramatic development of the reasons for it "[38] The women in the play are not in any way a threat to the protagonist but are in fact "propelled towards him as a moth is drawn to a candle flame". Helena is drawn towards him. So is Alison and that is why she comes back. Hence the provocation is all unwarranted. The play reflects upon the cruelty that results from inequality within marriage. Jimmy's empty passion seems to be undercut by his lack of awareness. He is totally ignorant of his wife's pregnancy. Also his inability to understand that her father's "Edwardian values are comparable to his own"[39].

His political claims are made questionable by his failure to see that her friend Helena is in fact the depersonalized product of an Establishment upbringing, that he mistakenly accused Alison of being. Such a marriage is an incomplete realization that offers growth to just one partner. Jimmy has never seen Alison as his equal and not even as a separate individual, and this is why Alison finds it impossible communicating with him. She rather finds it easier to have a rapport with Cliff to whom she confides of her pregnancy. Communication in the real sense occurs only between her and Cliff.

The only other woman who is seen on the stage is Helena. Helena like Jimmy, is middle-class, but she is an entirely honest character. She is middle- class not only by birth, but by her convictions as well. She interferes in the marriage for Alison's good for she genuinely sees Alison would be better off outside it, even before Alison is able to see it herself. It is she who makes Alison realize the inhuman mental torture that she has been subjected to. Alison finds it a respite talking to her, though the trumpet in the background keeps reminding them of Jimmy's dominating presence.

Between the two there is at least some sharing and communication. It is because of Helena that Alison gathers enough courage to go to church and in the process defies Jimmy. This naturally shocks Jimmy "Have you gone out of your mind or something?"(p.51) he roars. That Alison could step out of the parameters he has set, is totally unbelievable to him. Allison's revolt and Jimmy's reaction would have gathered enough sympathy and admiration for Alison, but this is cleverly coincided with the time of Hugh's mother's death. Therefore her going to church is seen as her refusal to be with Jimmy at a time when he needed her the most. Alison's act is hence allowed to be adversely judged and Jimmy is shown to be right.

Act III is the repetition of the first except that it is Helena who stands at the ironing board. Jimmy wants total conformity from all

women who would line with him; hence Helena too is now wearing his shirt above her own skirt. However Helena is different. She is middle class and according to A.E. Dyson this is why she is essentially "disruptive to Jimmy, both when she conspires against him and when she is his mistress..."[38]

However she does not compromise on her values and very soon refuses to stay with him any longer. Her walking out may be partly because of a guilt feeling of wrong done to Alison, but it is also because she cannot surrender or conform as completely as Jimmy wants her to.

The ending conforms to the prevalent male chauvinistic attitude. Alison comes back, a poor lost suffering woman. Looking rather ill, she feels guilty and foolish. Again it is she who begs forgiveness and avers, "I was wrong, I was wrong!"(p.95) And then:

> "All I wanted was to die, I never knew what it was like, I did not know it could be like that! I was in pain ... I thought if only if only he could see me now, so stupid and ugly and ridiculous. This is what he'd been longing for me to feel. This is what he wants to splash about in! I am in the fire and I'm burning and all I want is to die! It's cost him his child and any others I might have had! But what does it matter- this is what he wanted from me!

(III, ii. p.95)

Here again the concept of 'self' and the 'other' becomes operative. This ending becomes striking when read in this context. Alison submits to Jimmy's definition of love. Conforming to his standards she says, "Don't you see! I'm in the mud at last! I'm groveling! I'm crawling! Oh, God-"(p.95) David Cairns and Shaun Richards in "No Brave Causes" says, "Such a reading however has to be erected in opposition to that preferred by the text where the strength of characterization indicates that the dramatic intention is to create empathy with Jimmy and an acceptance of his self and social analysis as confirmed by Alison"[40].

Finally comes the most powerful visual image when Alison "collapses at his feet". He "stands frozen for a moment, then bends down and takes her shaking body in his arms"(p.95). They then indulge in their old game of bear and squirrel and seem to find solace. It shocks one to see that it is Alison who is the sufferer but is apologetic. She is accused of going away and of not sending flowers at Hugh's mother's funeral. She is accepted back only when she collapses at his feet and it is only then, that he condescends to pick her up. This powerful image seems to confirm his righteousness and places him on a higher pedestal. The narrated psyche at the center is structurally male. We never follow Alison off stage. The single set is

Jimmy's territory, and the women come and go. We do not follow their stories. We do not see Alison's response to her miscarriage except what she comes and tells Jimmy. As Michelene Wandor says:

> We are given no potent reason for her decision to return. All these are not important in a play where women are so well marginalized. The scenes between Alison and Helena, though touching and delicately written, are largely about Jimmy, both because the sound of his trumpet always reminds them (and us) of his dominating presence, and because Osborne does not really 'write' the women from within their own experiences. They are only important for their relationship to Jimmy"[41].

In *Look Back in Anger,* Woman is acceptable only if she surrenders completely, conforms to, as well as adapts the male's standards and mars her own individuality completely. Sadly, the last scene does not establish the end of a confrontation. It looks very likely that the whole cycle of attack, torture and collapse shall begin once again, once the escapist game of bear and squirrel comes to an end

Osborne's work comes full circle with *Dejavu* in 1992. He returns to Jimmy Porter thirty six years later, living in comfort in Shropshire, still accompanied by Cliff. But things haven't changed much. One also ought to remember that by the time John Osborne wrote *Dejavu, Look Back in Anger* had been well received and

critically reviewed. It had also seen its share of criticism, and John Osborne was extremely aware and sensitive to it. In the author's note to the play he wrote:

> "The original character of J.P was widely misunderstood, largely because of the emphasis on the element of 'anger' and the newspaper invention of 'angry young man'...Wearisome theories about J.P's sadism, anti-feminism even closet homosexuality, are still peddled to gullible students by dubious and partisan academics"[42].

Osborne comes around to defend Jimmy and calls him 'a man of gentler susceptibilies, constantly goaded by a brutal and coercive world'. Though the play speaks otherwise nevertheless John Osborne made a conscious attempt in *Dejavu* to rectify and justify Jimmy's position. He wanted 'a mild delivery' and avers "It is not necessary or advisable to express bitterness bitterly or anger angrily. Things should be delicately plucked out of the air not hurled like a protester's stone at the enemy." (p.279-80).

He attempts to justify his hero by squarely blaming Alison, but the justification itself is so hollow that the only purpose it serves is to highlight the fact that he certainly belongs to Jimmy's party:

> "If I still sound peevishly impatient after all this time with such commonplace incomprehension of the work whose reputation I am doomed to be buried beneath, it is because I am mystified by the myth. Indifference is the most blithely cruel and effective of weaponry. Hamlet is almost devoured by the inefficacy of those who surround him. It was Alison not her husband who was the most deadly bully. Her silence and her obdurate withdrawal were impregnable. The ironing board was not the plaything of her submission, but the bludgeon and shield which were impenetrable to all Jimmy's appeals to desperate oratory."[43]

But little did he realise that by now Jimmy's character had grown out of his hands. And now even consciously he could not dictate to him either to tone down his voice or convince the audience that he really had something to fight for. In *Dejavu* _too Jimmy remains what he essentially is - a roaring, pugnacious bore.

The play opens with the men- Jimmy (now J.P) and Cliff sprawled on a Sunday morning reading the papers and there is the "well- used ironing board"- the eternal symbol of drudgery. There is a woman again at the ironing board, only this time the wife has been

replaced by the daughter who wears a T-Shirt with the words "I am Scum" on it. J.P is of "indeterminate age, casually and expensively dressed" and is smoking a pipe. Going by his tone one might assume that he might have mellowed down a little, but very soon one realizes that he has not lost his sting. It is Alison's radio now that is on the top of the food-cupboard and she soon tunes it so that it emanates a loud blare of music. "She glances across to the men, then turns the volume down to a level",(p.32) yet J.P soon lowers his paper then gets up "slowly and deliberately... goes over to the transistor and turns it off". Alison in response "smiles sourly and puts on the headphones"

The older Jimmy is even more prone to monologues than earlier and mounts extensive attacks on progressives, gays, feminists, Australians, lower-middle-class, and the change in the Church of England. The cause for such outbursts again is absent as in *Look Back in Anger* and one grapples in vain in trying to justify it. His life appears a big waste when he sings:

I don't give a shit for Nicaragua,
I don't give a bugger for Brazil,
I don't give a hoot for Heethiopiaa,
I'm the one the nobs would like to kill.
--- --- ---

I don't give a fart for Venezuela,

> I don't even know it on the map...
> (p.295)

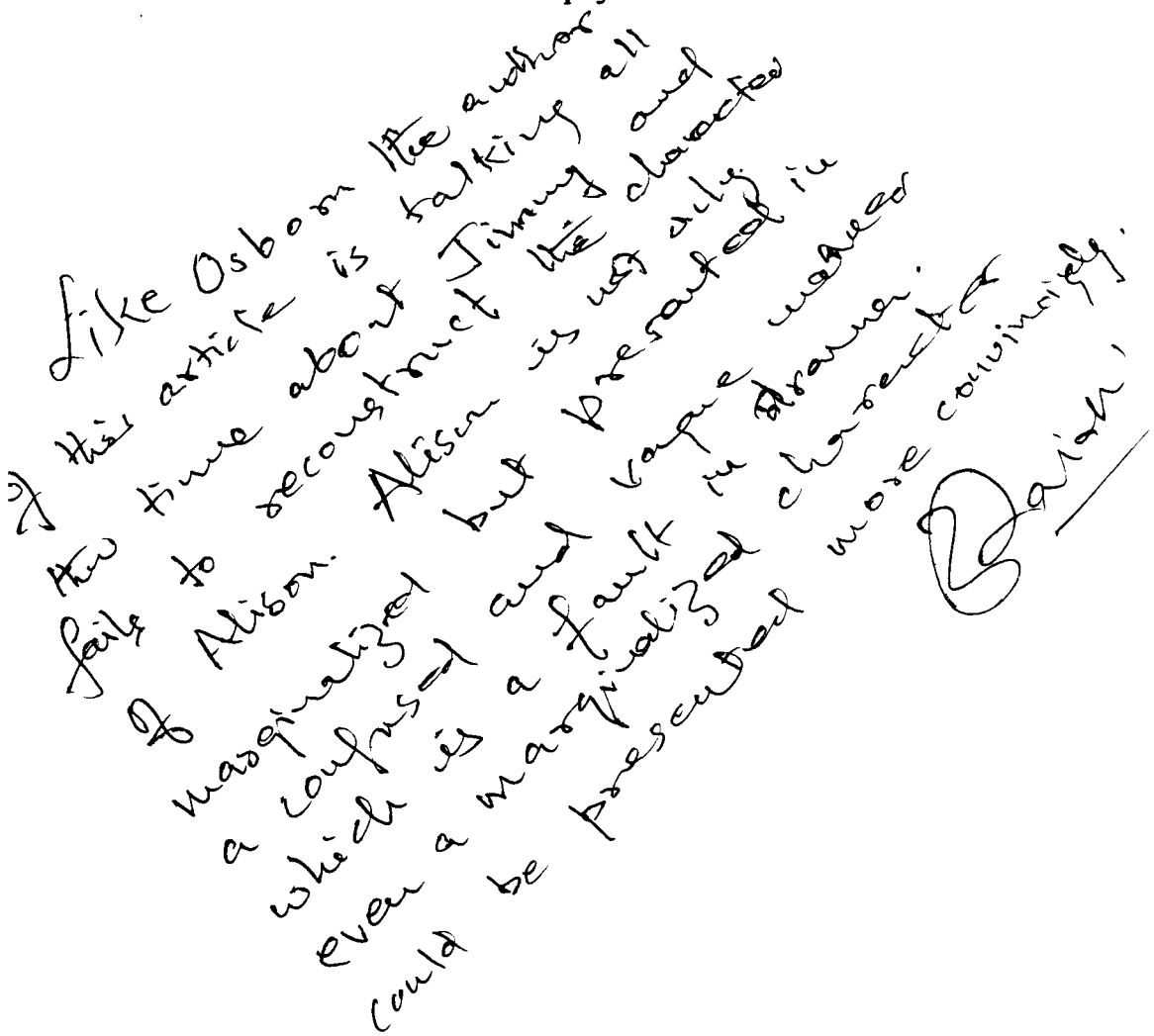
J.P like his counterpart in *Look Back in Anger* loves to speak and definitely wants to be heard, even though what he is saying might be utter nonsense:

> "...A recent survey carried out by the Human Engineering andSocial Technology Department of Chichester New Town University has produced an impressive body of evidence in its third report that the annual consumption of more than five hectares of white buttered toast per person may lead to a serious incidence of pre-martial incest, particularly among young people."(p.297)

And the warning cannot be missed: "Don't go to sleep". Alison is gone for good but Jimmy's jibes are there to stay. When his daughter questions him "How did you really feel when your first wife left you?", all he has to say is "I felt... I thought... I shall never have to go to the ballet again..."(p.299)

Dejavu was greatly criticized, yet it has two strong points: oblique comment on *Look Back In Anger* as myth and as a play, and the pain visible in Jimmy-sinking with his claret, his teddy bear and his Book of Common prayer.

Nevertheless one searches in vain for some independent women in Osborne but fail miserably. Women are totally marginalized and seldom do we hear their side of the story. The limelight clearly falls on the male and the narrate psyche remains male-centred.



Notes

1. Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama* (Great Britain: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992) 98.

2. Milton Shulman, *Evening Standard*, quoted by John Russell Taylor in Casebook Series of *Look Back in Anger*, 4th ed. (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1978) 41.

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5. Michelene Wandor, *Look Back in Gender*(London: Metheun, 1987) 51.

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taken from the above edition and have been incorporated in the text.

7. Michelene Wandor, *Look Back in Gender*, Ibid., 41.

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13. Preface to John Osborne, Collected Plays Vol. I: *Look Back in Anger and other Plays*, (London: Faber and faber.1993) 3.

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40. A.E. Dyson, op. Cit., 124.

41. David Cairns and Shaun Richards " No Good Brave Causes: The Alienated Intellectual and The End of Empire" op. Cit.,114.

42. Michelene Wandor, *Look Back in Gender* op. Cit., 46.

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Wesker and the Woman in Socio-political strife

Arnold Wesker wrote a number of plays but he is widely known as the author of the Triology - *Chicken Soup with Barley*(1958), *Roots*(1959) and *I'm Talking about Jerusalem*(1960). Set between 1936 and 1959, these three plays trace the history of the Kahns – a Jewish working class family from the East End of London. It is the story of an immigrant family trying to establish itself in their East End home and in the process traces its disintegration over a 20-year period and how their communist ideals collapse in the world that is changing around them.

Though the plays primarily trace the social, political and cultural beliefs of the Kahns, it is interesting to view them also on the basis of personal relationship and particularly on male-female relationship as this relationship occupies an integral part in almost all plays of Arnold Wesker. This relationship is present in *Chicken Soup with Barley* between Harry and Sarah, takes on a different hue in *Roots* between Roonie and Beatie and is again obvious in *I'm talking about Jerusuleam* between Ada and Dave. It is present in some of Wesker's other plays as well.

Wesker was Osborne's contemporary and *Chicken Soup with Barley* was performed when Arnold was twenty-six just as Osborne had

been when his first play was staged. Both Arnold Wesker and John Osborne were key contributors to 'The Royal Stage Company' which had George Devine as its proprietor. Both the plays focused on the working middle class.

Like *Look Back in Anger*, the *Triology* too is largely autobiographical. All the major characters are recreations from Wesker's own life. His own father was a Jewish tailor like Harry and his mother a communist, like Sarah. His wife was a Norfolk girl like Beatie of *Roots* and had left Norfolk to work as a waitress. *I am talking of Jerusalem* recaptures the experience of his sister and brother-in-law and their experiment to return to nature. However in contrast to Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, here the family is complete with woman, man and children.

Chicken Soup with Barley is a three-act play that starts in 1936 with the Kahn family preparing to take to the streets to counter a planned anti-Jewish march organized by the British Union of Fascists. The family is excited as they join the socialists, communists and Labour Party members and have to elude the police force as well. A notable exception in all this enthusiasm is the faint-hearted Harry, who would rather read a book and have a cup of tea than face confrontation. By act II (1946-47) Harry and his wife Sarah, have moved to Hackney and are facing a tough time with Harry out of work and their offsprings- Ada and Ronnie- away to sort out their own lives. The play concludes in 1956 after the Soviet invasion of

Hungary. Harry has had two strokes and can hardly move. Sarah is the only one who is still a party member and fighting for the working class.

Though primarily *Chicken Soup with Barley*(1958) talks of political struggle, it can be analyzed to see how much space is given to the woman in this ambience of struggle and fight. Sarah Kahn, the wife and the mother, is at the helm of affairs. She is the very axis, around whom the whole play revolves and stands in direct contrast to Alison by being exuberantly active and throbs with energy. In the stage directions, she is the first whom the playwright describes, "a small fiery woman," her "movements indicate great energy and vitality."[1]

Whereas Alison's voice was "drowned in the robust orchestration of the other two men"[2] , here it is Sarah's voice that is heard above the others, both by its intensity and by its tone. She is more articulate than her husband. Sarah has stepped out of the boundaries of the home and has a loud and confident voice for her opinions. In fact, it is she who does most of the talking especially when she is alone with her husband. Sarah reminds one of Jimmy Porter. She is expressive, articulate, feisty and full of passion. She wants action and has beliefs, convictions and enthusiasm. Like him, living is not just synonymous with eating, working and sleeping.

Here the traditional roles of man and woman have been clearly reversed. Harry Kahn, the husband is thirty-five, two years

Sarah's junior and an "anti-thesis of Sarah", "amiable but weak"(p.13). Whereas Sarah is an enthusiastic participant, Harry has only a secondary position. As the curtain rises, it is Sarah, who holds the stage, getting all the limelight and focus. She is no doubt a central character and goes around fussing about everything, but then also takes upon her shoulders every responsibility of the family.

Sarah has a voice and this is a direct result of her stepping out of the house. This can be traced to the expectation embedded deep within the psyche, that only man shall make major decisions. This results from the inherent conceptual difference between the value of stepping out of the house and the value of keeping a house. Because Sarah has stepped out of the house, she has also acquired a voice, can express opinions and take decisions. Harry in contrast is more passive. He replies only when questioned and that too reluctantly and only after a lot of pestering. Sarah more and more like a master can order around:

> SARAH: Come and make some tea. Ada
> will be here soon.
> HARRY: Leave me alone, Sarah.
> SARAH: Make some tea when I ask you! (II,i.p.37)

At times she becomes the female Jimmy, indulging in continuous nagging. Whether it is asking Harry about the time of the march, or if has had tea at

Lottie's, one sees a nagging woman coercing her husband to answer. Like her, the language she uses too has the power to shock. "Swine", "Weakling" and "Coward" are the adjectives she uses for her husband. Then there is also the ebullition, when she throws the saucer at Harry. The husband repeatedly begs to be left alone. One starts wondering if it is really as the stage directions suggest, "a well-meaning but maddening attempt to point out to a weak man his weaknesses" (p.14)

Glenda Leming believed that Sarah's character though based on Wesker's own mother, has not been recreated the way he intended. Because of her dominance in the play her very positiveness can be 'unsympathetic' and she refers to the stage directions to imply it. For Wesker this is a two edged quality.

> "Sarah could have been a patient, long suffering woman who loved all the time and apologized for him and excused him, but she didn't. She fought him."[5]

In an interview Wesker clarified that though this is a strength, but it is also a failing.

One is tempted to view Harry as the wronged man, though he is otherwise. He is a shirker, an escapist, a procrastinator and an idler all rolled in one. Harry's lethargy and Sarah's ineffective attempts to make him a participant in the ongoing political struggle has been skillfully interwoven in the fabric of the play. His wife knows him as a shirker and

therefore is rightfully irritated for having to put up with him. All she wants is that he should do something. Thus Sarah's nagging is not just an attempt to irritate. She has her reasons to behave the way she does.

Harry does not even fit in the traditional role of a husband. He does not shoulder the responsibilities of the family. Instead he is a dreamer. If left alone, he would like to shut himself up in his world of books. As soon as he enters home, he picks up a book and this happens time and again in the play. Taking up a book is not because of his undying love for books, but rather an escapist's device that helps him abstain from participating in the action, when he doesn't want to. He is a constant liar and would not like to own- up especially when he knows he has done something wrong and can be held responsible. "Oh leave off, Sarah" and "Leave me alone" are the phrases that come handy and are used to escape responsibility for his actions. He is 'artful' and Sarah, his wife knows him well. She tells him:

> "Aren't you artful, then? You think because you sit there pretending to read that I won't say anything? That's what you'd like that I should just come in and carry on and not say anything?"(p.34).

He is unstable as well. Either he himself keeps changing his jobs or else gets fired from one job to another- he is the 'first one to be fired and the last one to find work'(p.36).In act II when the industry is booming with

work, he manages to be chronically out of work. This of course means an additional burden on Sarah.

Sarah's life is a life throbbing with activity and vitality and in contrast Harry's is merely an existence. And worse still, it becomes more of an existence and less of living as the play progresses. He vegetates through life. In act I, one can see Sarah not only actively participating in politics, but demanding the participation of her husband as well. Left to himself Harry would have been content to laze in front of the fire with his book. In scene II of the same act, one comes to know when everyone was actively and enthusiastically participating in the demonstration, Harry was hiding at his mother's place.

In the second act, one gets a glimpse of Harry slothing on the sofa in contrast to Sarah who is as 'energetic as ever'(p.36). He has been sacked from his job. However he is in no hurry to find another. In the next scene their physical appearances are also contrasted. Harry now walks 'slowly and stooped' (p.47). He seems to have 'given up the fight'(p.47) whatever little he had been putting up. In the words of his son Ronnie, "his life is a total failure". And by the time the scene ends he has had his second stroke.

In the third Act, Harry's life has become a total existence. The second stroke has left him totally paralytic. He is now absolutely unfit for work. The metamorphosis to a complete physical wreck is now complete. Sarah too has transformed. In the first two acts her anger is characterized more by physical actions, whereas by the third act this gets reduced to mere words. But the cause in this case is not hard to find. She has seen years of suffering and it is this that has made her more introspective. Also by the third act, Harry has become a constant liability on Sarah. The latter now becomes more of a mother than a wife, looks after him catering to all his needs to the extent of cleaning his bowels as well. But it is the absence of his will to live that is most disturbing:

> Its ach a nebish Harry now... he won't do anything to help himself. I don't know, other men get ill but they fight. Harry's never fought... There were three men like this in the flats, all had strokes... They used to sit outside together and talk for hours on end and smoke. Sit and talk and smoke. That was their life. Then one of them decided he wanted to live, so he gets up and finds himself a job... But the other one he wanted to die... last week he died... But Harry was not like either of them. He didn't want to die but he doesn't seem to care about living. (III.i.p.60)

And the last scene completes this transformation from living to vegetating. While a card game is on and Sarah is participating, Harry sits by the fire,

gazing into it, quite oblivious of what is going on. The only words that he utters in the whole of the scene just express his total alienation, "I don't know the woman downstairs yet."(III.i.p.68).The contrast between the husband and the wife is hence very well brought out.

Thus *Chicken Soup with Barley* surely gives an important place to its woman who speaks loud enough to be heard. Monty sees her as a 'fighter' and Harry wonders if there is another one like her. Though the latter words might have been said with cynical contempt, they nevertheless reveal a different kind of woman. Sarah is the 'New Woman' woken up from her sound sleep that she had been sleeping since ages.

She is up with a new energy and a vitality bubbling within her. She is one of those women who are not content to remain within the confines of their hearths, who are not willing to accept what is passed to them by their husband and who do not want to be always at the receiving ends. She would rather move out, look at the world with her own eyes and participate in its on goings. Randolph Bourne defines the New Women thus:

> They are all social workers, decidedly emancipated and advanced, and so thoroughly healthy and zestful...They shock you constantly...They have an amazing combination of wisdom, and youthfulness, of humor and ability, and

innocence and self-reliance which absolutely belies everything...[4]

Sarah fits the definition almost perfectly.

An active participant in the political struggle, Sarah waits for no one when it comes to participation in the demonstration that has come ahead of schedule. One sees the wife rushing off with a rolling pin, thrusting a red flag and a hammer to her husband. The husband tries hard to keep pace with her: "Hey Sarah, wait for me- Sarah! Hey, wait for me!" (p.24). She is a perfect picture of the 'New Woman,' not pleased always to be led. She is not shy of leading when the occasion so demands. In the very first scene, it is Sarah whom the playwright chooses to voice the "keynote of Political commitment". More important Sarah is practical as well. When Harry simply cannot comprehend what's wrong in holding two meetings instead of one, Sarah is quick to give the commonsense reply that "if nothing else, it costs more"(p.17)

Sarah has donned the mantle of a political activist, but she has not given up her role of a loving and caring mother. She combines beautifully and harmoniously the feminine values of love and care, with active political action and her whole hearted commitment to its ideals. Stepping into the hitherto considered male forte of politics, she has not compromised on her feminine role. The chicken soup is prepared with all the care, attention and love: it is kept simmering for the whole day. Food

equates with communication. The eponymous chicken soup becomes a symbol for caring within a community.

> "When Ada had diphtheria [---] it was Mrs Bernstein's soup who saved her. Ada still has that taste in her mouth - chicken soup with barley. She says it is a friendly taste."(p.67

She is genuinely concerned and alarmed, when she hears that Hymie is hurt. She comes back exhausted from the demonstration, but her motherly concern for her children makes her rush almost immediately to fetch them home. It is she who has helped the family wade through the crises. She fought alone many a times, as when she had to rush the seriously ill Ada with Harry deliberately remaining absent from home.

Sarah incorporates the feminist slogan "Personal is political". One of the theories of feminism says that woman's place in the family system is the source from which other inequalities derive. Followers of the theory believe that marriage was invented exclusively to gratify man's selfish needs and wants. Mrs. Stanton for example, had insisted that she and her friends were not against marriage as such "only against the present form that makes man master and woman slave. The only revolution that we would inaugurate is to make woman a self-supporting, dignified, independent, equal partner with man in the state, the church and home."

Thus a woman's contribution to the decision- making process, correlated directly to her value as measured by the outside world.

One of the consequences of woman stepping out of the shackles of the home, is to lessen the dominance of the male by breaking his monopoly on the outside world and giving his spouse some of the authority derived from taking part in the external world. Robert Blood writes:

> " A working wife's husband listens to her more. She expresses herself and has more opinions. Instead of looking up into her husband's eyes and worshipping him, she levels with him... Thus her power increases and relatively speaking the husband's falls"[20].

This concept is nicely exemplified in Sarah who has a say both inside and outside her home.

Sarah finely combines the twin roles that of a housewife's and mother with that of a political activist's. Extra- vital, full of energy, an active participant in politics, she is still a good mother and a good wife. Her attitude towards and her efficiency at both the roles can be very well contrasted with Cissie, her sister-in-law. Cissie too, is a political activist and a good worker of the party. But then she is precise in her manner "with a dry sense of humour" (p.27) and "cold and calculated with not a bit of warmth"(p.20). Sarah's criticism of Cissie hence looks justified:

> I hate her !... Not a bit of warmth, not a bit... Everything cold and calculated. People like that cannot teach love and

> brotherhood... Love comes now you have to start with love. How can you talk about socialism otherwise?
> (I.ii. pp.28-29)

But all this has not come free. Combining the two roles makes greater demands from the New Woman. She is all the more burdened coping up with both the roles. The apparent liberation hence, has been bought at a great cost.

Though Sarah is given centrality, yet communication and interaction between the husband and the wife is conspicuous by its absence. Harry talks and interacts only when Sarah is not around. On first glance it might seem that Sarah is the domineering wife and Harry the hen-pecked husband, but in reality it is not so. Rather it is Sarah who craves to talk to Harry. She begs pleadingly, "Why must you always smoke? Talk with me. Talk Harry." (p.45) Here is a woman's desperate exigency for sharing. Ironically while Sarah is expressing her need Harry has his first stroke, which further removes any possibility of interaction:

> Harry: Sarah! *[he stops chokes and then stares wildly around him]* Mamma, Mamma...
> (II.i.p.45)

The stroke now leaves him all the more aloof and alienated. It widens the already present rift between the spouses. His call for "mamma" symbolizes that what he needs now is not a partner with whom he can share his life with, but a mother who shall look after him, serve him and care for him.

There is a potent sense of insecurity in Sarah. All the outward liberation has not freed her from emotional dependence. When Harry has his first stroke, Sarah is left with nothing but her political faith and hope for Ronnie's future. A devoted mother and a housewife that she was, she had faith in her own family. But with even that breaking, there comes a sense of insecurity. Michelene Wandor sees the disintegration of the family as inevitable.

> "It is as if the family already carries the seeds of its own disintegration in the 'unnatural' reversal of gender roles".

Imaginatively it is made to appear that a woman can only be strong if the man is weak and vice versa so that "a theme that also rings in the play is the nature of manhood and the definition of male identity"[7]. The lament thus figures:

> My daughter lives two hundred miles away from me and my husband is a sick man. That's my family. Well it's a family, I suppose."
> (p.53)

The loneliness of a woman, who is also a mother and a wife, is expressed when she tells Ronnie "I do not mind not having money, we can always eat, you know that I cannot bear to be on my own."(p.69). Harry seems to be marginalized, but a second look at the play speaks otherwise. What apparently looks to be marginalization is not actually so. Harry no doubt, remains silent, but this does not necessarily mean that he is not given a chance to speak. On the contrary, his silence is symbolic of a stubbornness not to interact with his wife. It is an aloofness that questions the righteousness of the actions of the other person, and puts a question mark on the other person's beliefs and convictions.

The play ends with the assertion that one must care for others and that is the only way of spiritual salvation and because this assertion comes from a woman, for the moment one almost tends to take in that Sarah's super-human regenerative strength might save the otherwise doomed family. This remains a paradox because when it comes to the passing of values to the next generation, Harry who is a failure in all aspects, is the one chosen by the playwright to do so and the son Ronnie, rather than the daughter Ada, the one to take them over. Patriarchy thus is prevalent. It is apparent when Harry talks with Ronnie when Sarah is offstage, speaking out what seems to be his philosophy: "You cannot alter people Ronnie. You can only give them some love and hope they'll take it."(p.56).

As the play begins to wind up, it conforms more and more to this patriarchal set-up. Ronnie who was an enthusiastic follower and admirer of his mother now finally turns to his father, though the latter has nothing to offer save negative values. He sees his own image projected in his father " I watch you and I see myself and I'm terrified."(II.ii.p.56) Even more suggestive are the words, "I wish I had not shouted at him as I used to" (p.72). His words thus question the legitimacy of all his mother's convictions. A total rejection of the mother and the alignment with the father has thus taken place.

In the play one finds another free thinking woman in Sarah's daughter, Ada. In the beginning Ada whole heartedly participates in the political on goings. She is however the first one to be disillusioned. Questioning all the values held dear by Sarah, she decides to quit. She asserts "I'm not afraid of being on my own"(p.45). Ironically what appears to be her own decision, is not actually hers but Dave's, who has had a personal experience of disillusionment. When Ada leaves, Sarah cannot comprehend why she has left her. But not ready to be disillusioned, she consoles herself with the assurance that she has Ronnie with her, "At least I've got you around to help me solve problems."(p.45). Hence Ronnie is the one on whom she has the maximum faith and totally relies on. He is often referred to as "my Ronnie".

Act III is set ten years later. Sarah is tired, but is eagerly waiting for her son. She is left all alone as Prince, Hymie and Cissie leave and Harry goes off to sleep. Ronnie finally comes, but is no longer the "enthusiastic Ronnie"(p.69) Even he is completely disillusioned by now. "I'm sick"(p.69) he tells his mother. In the final light Sarah's whole stance is questioned. Her whole struggle appears wasted and every drop of heroism drained out of it. And then it is no one else but her son on whom she had been banking so much, who questions her and accuses her:

> "I stand here and a thousand different voices are murdering my mind. Do you know, I couldn't wait to come home and accuse you."(p.71)

In spite of all this, Sarah still clings to the old faith with a blind optimism and conviction. One starts doubting her credibility, especially when Ronnie questions her 'I don't suppose you've bothered to read what happened in Hungary' (p.71) and then again "What's happened to us? Were we cheated or did we cheat ourselves?(p.72) And it is painful to be hit where it hurts the most:

> You've never been right about anything. You wanted everybody to be happy but you wanted them to be happy your way... The family you always wanted has disintegrated, and the great ideal you always cherished has exploded in front of your eyes. But you won't face it.

> You just refuse to face it. I do not know how you do it but you do- you just do *[louder]* you're a pathological case Mother- do you know that? (III,ii.pp.72-73)

Sarah still argues for the values that she holds dear. She still has strength to put her case bravely "You want me to cry again," She asks. "We should all sit down and cry... If the electrician who comes to mend my fuse blows it instead, so I should stop having electricity?" She argues. She still talks of "light and love," and desperately tries to argue her case, saying that she is a simple woman. Referring to this 'simple' label Wesker himself believed that though politically Sarah is simple, emotionally she is not. She is a much more complex person emotionally because she has "strong values". In a bid to convince the son, the mother enumerates all her past struggles in front of Ronnie. She tells him of all the fights she had to fight alone because her husband simply refused to help. She recalls the incident when she was pregnant and Ada had diphtheria. Harry at such a moment of crisis had walked out of the house and there was not a single penny at home. He was later seen to be eating beef sandwiches, whereas his wife and daughter were struggling for life. But Sarah emerges more and more a pathetic character. She says she had been fighting against Harry because "he does not care":

> Sarah: I fought everybody who did not care. All the authorities, the shopkeepers. Even today, those stinking assistance officers I could

> buy them with my little finger. Even now I am still fighting them... And you want to be like them.... Like your father? I'll fight you then.
> Ronnie: And lose again. (III,ii.p.75)

Sadly like Ronnie avers, however, it is a losing battle that she had been fighting.

Sarah's position is not all that central as it looks in the beginning. No doubt she is more vocal but her talk is rarely paid attention to. She is hardly ever taken seriously. Her fight is seen to be a fight of an ignorant fool, who does not even know what she is fighting for. "She does not know" (p.62) is an accusation continually leveled against her. Monty avers:

> For her the world is black and white. If you're not white, you must be black. She cannot see shades in character... Do you think she ever read a book on political economy in her life? Bless her! Someone told her Socialism was happiness, so she joined the party.
> (III,i.p.62)

Her ignorance is mocked at. She is ridiculed because according to them, she is a defaulter as she is not supposed to have read

anything. They refuse to recognize the fact that she had hardly any time on her hands, coping up with various roles- looking after an imbecile husband, caring for the kids, looking after the home and being politically active. She is a simple person and yet not so simple as Monty. It is Monty who has swung from "communism to political agnosticism"[6] as he is unable to cope with betrayals and disillusions. It is he who has made a choice in black and white terms. Sarah on the other hand has been fighting on two fronts: one against the system and another on the individual level:

> Now the people have forgotten. I sometimes think they're not worth fighting for, because they forget so easily... You think it doesn't hurt me- the news about Hungary? You think I know what happened and what didn't happen? Do any of us know? Who do I know who to trust now- God, who are our friends now...?
> (p.173)

Sarah's outburst proves that hers is not a blind struggle. She is a conscious fighter, well aware of the alternatives or the lack of them. Her value of human beings is balanced by her disillusion with them; her confidence is qualified by mistrust. But she nonetheless makes the decision to go on fighting against all her doubts. She might be a simple minded person, but here the choice that she is making is not a simple one. "It is existential in nature and much more complex than that made by either Monty or Ronnie"[7].

Tragically after doing all that, she gets no thanks neither as a mother nor as a wife. On the contrary, her concern and her care becomes a laughing matter. Her anxiety when she hears that Hymie is hurt is only ridiculed, especially by Hymie himself "If there is one thing, Sarah loves, it's someone who's ill to fuss over.' (p.25) Her motherly instincts and her concern to see that the family is well fed is also not spared. She insists that Ronnie should have a piece of cake that she had baked especially for him when he returns from Paris, but she is categorically told "not to fuss" (p.70). And Hymie laughs at her back:

> No sooner you finished one cup that you got another...God forbid you, you should ever say you're not hungry. She starts singing that song 'As man is only human he must eat before he can think'"(p.30)

And when all of them join in to sing the song "As man is only human...", Sarah's loneliness and isolation only gets heightened. But as this occurs quite early in the play, it shows that it is not only Sarah's final stand that is criticized, but that she has been isolated all through. The process of disillusionment that started with the second act completes itself in the third. Her life now revolves around Harry who is completely immobilized, filling the insurance certificates and coping up with the humdrum existence.

Sarah does fascinate one, but one is left with the feeling that she loves humanity at the expanse of those near her. At no stage does she neglect the physical needs and the demands of her own family and yet she is made to be seen as divorced from charity so that somehow her final isolation and loneliness stands justified. Never the less one remembers Sarah, for she is the only positive character in the play. She fights against all odds in spite of her completely shattered personal life. All this does give her some dignity and a tragic grandeur. And this muddle headed, stubborn, working class woman does touch a chord somewhere.

The second play of the triology *Roots* (1959) again has a woman on its centre stage. The heroine, Beatie Bryant is engaged to Ronnie Kahn, who has already appeared in *Chicken Soup with Barley* as Sarah's son. Ronnie is conspicuous by his absence here. Beatie comes home, all full of Ronnie, who is expected to join her soon. She stays first with her married sister Jenny, and then with her parents. As in *Chicken Soup with Barley* here too, the sense of family is quite strong, though the Bryants are at loggerheads at each other. Beatie, like Roonie has been instrumental in cracking the monolithic family structure but unlike Roonie she is not weary and rather basks in the glory of light and self realization towards the end. It is because of her that the play ends with a positive note.

In terms of plot, nothing much happens except that when the whole family has gathered to welcome Ronnie, he doesn't turn up. Instead a letter arrives stating he has given the engagement and the relationship a second thought. This no doubt shocks Beatie but then also proves as a catalyst for her to reanalyze herself. The title itself is quite suggestive. As Christopher Innes pointed out in "Arnold Wesker: Utopian Realism" that the play talks of "agricultural laborers and peasants, yet they are culturally so dispossessed that they seem to be without roots"[10]. The woman here liberates herself and she does so by mastering language. She begins by merely parroting her intellectual lover, but in the process finds her own voice.

Right from the time the play opens one realises that this is indeed female territory. It opens with "a rather ramshackle house in Norfolk where there is no water laid on, nor electricity nor gas" and very "few amenities"[11]. A woman Jenny is putting her child to bed. She is humming to herself. Very soon the male (her husband) enters writhing in pain and breaks this peace.

Beatie arrives and announces that Roonie, the man she has been going out with, would be following her soon and that they plan to get married. She has returned home, but the conflict between the two ways of life- one that she had left behind and the one Roonie has taught her to lead-

becomes apparent quite early in the argument about comics. As soon as she picks up a comic she is immediately reminded of Ronnie's reprimand :

> " 'Christ woman, what can they give you that you can be so absorbed?' So you know what I used to do? I used to get a copy of the Manchester Guardian and sit with that wide open- and a comic behind."
>
> Jimmy: Manchester Guardian Blimey Joe- he don' believe in havin' much fun then?
>
> Beatie: That's what I used to tell him-'fun' he say ' Playing an instrument is fun, painting is fun, reading a book is fun, talking with friends is fun, but a comic? A comic? For a young woman of twenty-two? (p.89)

This actually sets up the tone for the things to come. Physically Ronnie is absent throughout the play, yet he overpowers Beatie and her way of thinking and in this way she is overshadowed by his towering presence in her life. This device of keeping the oft- talked- of character offstage serves a very important role. In *Look Back in Anger* Jimmy's presence could not be ignored even when he was not physically present, partially by the loud trumpet one heard and partially because he was the central character and very important in terms of plot. Similarly Roonie is present even in his absence. In fact he is more important in *Roots* than in the other plays of the *Triology* and his presence is "recreated through Beatie partly by the

way she quotes and mimics him but mainly through what she shows us of the influence he has on her"[12]. She cannot forget his presence even for a moment.

Wesker tried earnestly to depict the growth of a simple peasant girl to the point of self-realization. She does no heroic acts to reach the state, rather she discovers her potentials by discovering her own voice. Christopher Innes believes Beatie's transformation is even greater than the contrast between the first and last stages of Ibsen's feminist prototype in *A Doll's House*.

> "The implication is clearly that Beatie's conversation will have as wide-ranging social significance as the classic slamming of the door by Ibsen's heroine"[13]

However although Nora's reveals her "inner turmoil" and forecasts her rebellion against convention it is performed as a set piece to demonstrate her marital subjugation. By contrast, Beatie's pleas come "straight from the heart".

The span covered is merely a fortnight in her life in contrast to *Chicken Soup with Barley* that covers a life span of twenty years. Beatie has been so thoroughly subjected to Ronnie's ideas about life and socialism and almost about everything under the sun, that her own voice has been lost in the process. Carol Gilligan in the essay "Getting Civilized" maintains that

> "...girls and women in their efforts to make and keep their relationships take large part of themselves out of the relationship. In a research it was found that women often keep out of relationships those parts of themselves which they most want to bring into relationships - their voice, their creativity, their brilliance and their vitality[14].

This is, thus, in part a protective move designed to preserve from invalidation or attack those parts of themselves women feel are most essential to preserve which they most love and value. In this case, Beatie would have made a very interesting case study. Another stalling discovery made was that girls describe the relational impasse that forces dissociation: that if they speak they will lose the relationship. Consequently some compromise between voice and relationship is struck. Underlying this effort is a profound optimism that constitutes hope in the face of despair - a belief that someday things will change for the better. Beatie has undergone a similar compromise.

In reality the life in London has done very little to change her opinions, though she behaves otherwise. Therefore when she comes home she wants to believe that she has changed for the better and wants her family to respond accordingly. But the life in London has actually just managed to refine her tastes. The ideas of Ronnie too have had little influence on her and she parrots Ronnie not because she believes in him,

but rather because she thinks by doing so she can influence him and win over a husband.

Roots is a play that talks extensively on language and its power. It shows candidly how a hold on language can result in power. Ronnie has the power as his hold on language is complete. As far as Beatie is concerned, she is a mere outsider. Language does not belong to her. She is always at her wits' end as far as language is concerned. She is like her mother Mrs. Byrant who has no answer to the question "How do words affect you? Do you find them beautiful?" and she naively answers "Them's as good as any" When continually assailed by the daughter with questions like "I mean what do they do to you? How do the words affect you? Are you moved? Do you find them beautiful?... Do they make you feel better", she has no answer except that "it's the tune I like. Words never mean anything."

The daughter tries to teach her mother, but discovers to her horror that these concepts are completely foreign to her as it is to the family. She is unsuccessful also because she herself is not very clear. She admits that she had the same questions as her mother when she first met Roonie. For example she remembers asking what makes a pop song third rate. And Roonie's answer had failed to satisfy her fully. "I don't know what he talks about something about registers, something about commercial world blunting our responses." (p.115). Like Jimmy of *Look Back in Anger*

Roonie it seems has so much to say " 'Give yourself time woman.' he says, 'Time ! You can't learn how to live overnight. I don't even know and half the world don't even know but we got to try. Try co's we're still suffering from the shock of two world wars and we don't know it. Talk and look and listen and think and ask questions", and this poor Norfolk girl knows neither how to ask questions nor how to talk.

Beatie can only parrot Ronnie's ideas and when the set phrases and clichés fail her, she accuses her mother, as she finds in her a perfect dumping ground. The accusations leveled at her are many. She accuses her mother for her lack of refined taste and alleges she herself could not acquire sophisticated taste because she was never given an opportunity to be one. The radio was switched off as soon as the classics began and that she could never read anything as there were no books in the house. Mrs. Bryant is zapped at the accusations and hardly knows how to react to such criticism from her own daughter. "What's gone into you now gal?" The mother- criticism does not end there and continues. She hates her mother for lacking "majesty" and for "shutting out the world". The poor peasant woman does not have much in way of an explanation: "I fed you- I clothed you. I took you out to the sea. What more do you want? We're only country folk you know. We 'ent got not big things here you know."(p.127).

Beatie gears up the whole family and prepares them physically and mentally to welcome Ronnie. She wants everyone to be at their best when he arrives:

> "I don't want any of you to let me down when Ronnie comes. I want him to see we're proper. I'll buy you another bowl so's you don't wash your hand in and I'll get some more tea cloths so's you 'ont use the towels and no swearin..."

which is where the language again comes in. Beatie wants a reformation on the language because Ronnie would be here. It is another matter however that Ronnie himself swears as well. "He swears all right, only I don't want him to hear you swear." Beatie tries hard to make everything perfect for Roonie's arrival. Mrs. Bryant can't help commenting: "Blust you'd think it were the bloody Prince of Egypt comin" (p.131)

Ronnie is the best thing that has happened to Beatie and she doesn't want to take chances and let him go. For her, it was love at first sight. She loved Ronnie when she first set eyes on him at the Dell Hotel where he was working in the kitchen. It was more or less an one sided affair, with Beatie chasing Ronnie with compliments and presents till he finally gave up to her. Though he never really admitted that he loved her, for a simpleton like Beatie even the silent acknowledgement was enough. Beatie pretended that she was interested in all the political talk that Roonie indulged in, precisely because she like all traditional women she thinks she

would be acceptable to the male if she is able to adapt his standards and norms.

When everything is set, the whole family gathers to welcome Roonie. Not able to contain her excitement, Beatie gets so worked up that she now has a "quote for everything". She quotes him to such an extent that she effaces her personality completely. She is no longer Beatie but has Roonie's mask on.She climbs a chair, thus raising herself on a pedestal and avers:

> if wanting the best thing in life means being a snob, then glory hallelujah I'm a snob. But I'm not a snob Beatie, I just believe in human dignity and tolerance and cooperation and equality and ... " (p.141).

Beatie then makes the family play a game with the hope that it would set them thinking. Putting forth a story of a young girl she asks them to judge which of the five characters is morally the most guilty - Archie, the man whom the girl loves who is on the other side of the river and who does not love her but takes advantage of her, a wise man who advises her to do what she thinks is the best, a ferryman who takes her across the river on the condition that she strips, or Tom the fourth man, who has always said he loved her but now refuses to do anything with her. This moral dilemma is too much for the family to fathom and they even

refuse to think about it. Mrs. Bryant is rather more concerned about the tea getting cold. So Beatie tells then what Roonie thinks:

> "He say the gal is responsible only for makin' the decision to strip off and go across and that she do because she's in love. After that she's the victim of two phoney men - one who don't love her but take advantage of her and one who say he love her but don't love her enough to help her, and that the man who say he love her but don't do nothin' to help her is most responsible because he were the last one she could turn to."

The conclusion that she spells out for the dilemma is actually not hers. She cannot think for herself as an overdose of Ronnie's ideas have dulled her logics and yet she does not miss out in pointing out to others the dangers of not thinking. "Everyone must argue and think or they will stagnate and rot and rot will spread."

It is immediately after this that a message comes from Ronnie saying he has decided not to come and that the relationship is over. The letter shocks her." *She cannot move. She stares around speechlessly at everyone."* (p.142). Then she tries to find out what went wrong where:

> "He always wanted me to help him but I never could. Once he tried to teach me to type but soon ever I made a mistake I'd give up. I'd give up every time! I couldn't bear making mistakes."(p.143)

and then:

> "He used to suggest I start to copy real object on to my painting instead of only abstracts and I never took heed."(p.143)

and the guilt continues:

> "He gimme a book sometimes and I never bothered to read it."(p.143).

Like a traditional girl Beatie searches for faults within herself for the relationship that had turned sour. She thinks it is perhaps because she lacked somewhere that the relationship failed.

Shocked and lost, Beatie, like the girl in the story she just narrated, appeals for support from her family: "Your daughter's been ditched. It's your problem as well, ain't it? I'm part of your family, aren't I? Well, help me then!... Talk to me - for God's sake, someone talk to me." But no one has much sympathy for her.She is left high and dry. They seem sick and tired of her. Just because she has dared to be different from them, she is not much sympathized with. Mrs. Bryant feels that she had done what she could - prepared food for Roonie, would have treated him as her son if he had come, and had got the whole family together to greet him. This according to her has been enough. She would now rather go ahead with the tea. Her father does not know and is not bothered.

And then it is here that the transformation from 'chrysalis to butterfly' takes place. This change though startling and unexpected is

dramatically satisfying and convincing. Carol Gilligan in Contemporary Playwrights says:

> "This metamorphosis of a personality as it were, is an act of romantic inspiration which could well be compared with Beatie's dance to the rhythm of Bizet's L Arlesienne Suite at the end of the second act"[15].

No amount of tutoring from Roonie could have transformed Beatie to such an extent. It is because the transformation is now from within. She realizes the supreme truth that she wants to be 'alive' and acknowledges that living is "asking questions all the time, all the time" She wants to find a reason for living "We don't fight for anything, we're so mentally lazy we might as well be dead." (p.147).

So by the time the play draws to a close, Beatie has finally discovered her own voice, a voice that does not merely parrot Ronnie. So though at the end of the play the woman still stands alone, distanced and unjustified by her own family, this time however she has her own voice. "D'you hear that? D'you hear it? Did you listen to me? I'm talking. I'm talking Jenny, Frankie, Mother. I'm not quoting no more" (p.148). This articulation has not changed much though. Beatie has rediscovered herself, yet no one is very impressed. "Mrs. Bryant gets up to sit at a table grumbling to herself "Oh hell, I had enough of her - let her talk a while she'll soon get fed up." (p.148)

Like Sarah of *Chicken Soup with Barley*, Beatie stands alone at the end. "Listen to me someone", she cries desperately. "God in heaven Roonie! It does work, It's happening to me, I can feel it's happened, I'm beginning, on my own two feet..." (p.148). But the final triumphant statement comes from the stage directions: *As Beatie stands alone, articulate at last, the curtain falls.*

This play as Michelene Wandor sees it, continues the theme of female articulacy (i.e Sarah), but presents it in a different light at a different time. Here we have a young (gentile) woman, who takes charge of her own voice:

> "Articulacy is passed on from jewish mother (Sarah), via Jewish son (Ronnie) to gentile woman (Beatie). Beatie's family cannot provide support she needs at the time of crises, and in any case she has already defected, acquiring a new voice: Ronnie's. Her own voice, therefore, must necessarily separate itself both from her natural family and her acquired ideology" [10].

Beatie has brought articulacy home to her roots and away from where she acquired it (London and Ronnie) and even though without much recognition she knows she has traveled a great distance in terms of growth and yet she is alone in this non-articulate world of Norfolk.

The third play *I am talking of Jerusaleum* like *Chicken Soup with Barley* charts a process of disillusionment but this time on a private scale. It focusses on Ada, Sarah's daughter and her husband Dave who moves from London to Norfolk in an attempt to build a socialist life for themselves. Dave works as a carpenter for the colonel but is soon sacked and then he tries to make a living by making furniture by hand. The experiment however fails and the curtain is drawn as they pack up to leave, in contrast to the first scene where we saw them unpack.

In the Act I, it is Sarah and Roonie who are there with Ada and Dave. This is another female centered scene. Sarah is there buttering bread and has brought with her some bottled chicken soup like a concerned mother, keeping up with her image from *Chicken Soup with Barley*. This is Ada's and Dave's utopia that has neither the comforts of electricity nor smooth roads, running water or a lavatory. Ronnie stands on a box conducting the gramophone and then starts shouting slogans like "Down with Capitalism! Long live the workers Revolution! ... And long live Ronnie Kahn too!"(.158). He is completely fascinated by the idea that no one objects to his slogan shouting and no one argues. One can say anything, jump about, spin in the air, do somersaults or bang the earth. He finds all this very wonderful.

Here is the beautiful delineation of the slogan "Personal is Political". Dave's concept of socialism is a William-Morris life style

"based on craft where work and family are one"[17]. His ideals are in tune with Sarah's but she is upset as the mother in her dominates and she feels sad as her children have moved away from her "I brought up two nice children and I want to see them round me--- But all right, so you want to go away, so you want to build a life of your own---" (p.160) is her lament. Adding to her agony comes the comment from Ronnie "Aren't you proud that your children are the first to pick up the ruins?" (p.157). Then in a scene reminiscent of *Chicken Soup with Barley* Sarah is laughed at when naively she is impressed by Ronnie's recitation of poetry and wants that he should get it published, little realizing that he is just quoting. Then as a humanist as she is, Sarah cannot figure out how socialism can work in an environment bereft of people. She can neither figure out nor justify why Dave and Ada have to leave for Norfolk. Dave's reasoning that mass production saps a person out and that "morning after morning have cold hatred in their eyes brutalized" fail to satisfy her. Again the fear of loneliness of a mother is highlighted when she believes that Dave has taken Ada away from her as he hates her:

> Sarah: And Dave doesn't like me- you know that?
> I don't know why it should be like that he doesn't like me. I don't think I've ever done anything to hurt him (PAUSE). Perhaps that's why he's taking you away, because he doesn't like me. Who knows!
> (I.i. p.167)

and then again:

> Ach! Children! You bring them up, you teach them this, you teach them that, you do what you think is right and still its no good. They grow up and they grow away and you're left with---with---
>
> (p.167)

She gropes with words as she realizes that she's left with absolutely nothing but a paralytic husband and her children moving away. This breaking away of the family hurts the mother the most.

Here again there is an emphasis on language. In Act I we find that both the women are hard of hearing, thus cutting down the degree of communication possible between them. Then there is Ada who chooses to hum rather than answer her mother and this naturally upsets Sarah, for whom communication has always been vital. "What you humming for?' She wonders, "Humming! All of a sudden she does this humming when I talk to her. A new madness. Stop it Ada. Stop it! Silly girl."(p.167) And in Act II it is Ada who talks of language after she returns visiting her sick father who has had his second stroke. Ada now laments she had never actually told her father how much she loves him "Useless bloody things words are. Ronnie and his bridges! Words are bridges, he wrote, to get from one place to another. Wait till he's older and he learns about silences-they span worlds--- What bridges? Bridges?" (p.)She remembers the time during the war when she was all alone with Sarah. "Mummy'd sit

in the chair, straight up and fall asleep. And every time she did that and I looked at her face it was so sweet, so undesirably sweet- that I'd cry. There! Each time she fell asleep I'd cry. But yet I find it difficult to talk to her! So there. Explain it! Use words and explain that to me."

In fact all the women characters of *I am talking of Jerusalem* complain of lack of communication. In the second act it is Esther Ada's aunt, who again finds this lack of communication glaring. She believes that Dave has changed. Nostalgically she recollects how her mother believed in not only loving her children but also showing it. She would hum while cooking, feeding and dressing them up. She would coo even as she scolded them. The advice that the aunt gives to Dave is thus straightforward "You want to give us beautiful things? Talk to us. You think Cissie and I fight? You're wrong silly boy. She talks to me." (p.205) This desperate need of a woman to talk and thus share is incomprehensible to Dave however. He retorts back, "I talked enough! You bloody Kahns you! You all talk. Sarah, Ronnie all of you." (p.205)

In the third act there is an interesting twist to the play as it introduces a new figure in the drama. Libby, an old time friend of Dave arrives. He is not Jewish but an ex RAF and is cynical about this back to nature move of Dave and Ada. He, like Sarah, also accuses them of being individualists, something even Sarah had done to little effect. Besides these ideas he also brings others that startle one. It brings to mind Jimmy

Porter misogynist stance as for example when he makes his famous speech of a woman dirtying you up "A Woman dirties you up as well, you know. She and the world – they change you, they bruise you, they dirty you up ---" His invectives are not yet over and he further goes on to describe his ex wife whom he believes like all women wanted possessions:

> The man provides a home- bang! She's got another possession. Her furniture, her saucepans, her kitchen – bang, bang, bang! She got another possession. Her furniture, her saucepans, her kitchen- bang, bang, bang! Then she has a baby- bang again--- And this is the way she grows. She grows and she grows and she grows and she takes from a man all the things she once loved him for – so that no one else can have them--- I think I hate women because they have no vision."(p.182)

According to Michelene Wandor "Although Libby is an outsider to the Jewish family, he is of course from the dominant, gentile culture and these ideas in themselves carry an implied threat both to the traditional Jewish family with a woman as the strong centre and the more emancipated version in the Kahn household"[18]. Libby's diatribe against women startles one to take notice. Like Jimmy Porter he laments that his wife did nothing to remind him that she was alive, "She might glance at a

newspaper or do a bit of knitting, but nothing else- nothing that might remind me she was alive"(183)

The play ends with Dave and Ada's failure. Dave is thrown out of the workshop and his idea of utopia doesn't work. The last scene shows them packing up to return. And Ronnie reverberates the familial devotion as he still cares for Harry's physical needs in a rare demonstration of male closeness and the optimism of his last shout is prevalent "We must be bloody mad to cry."

The Wesker *Triology* thus takes an epic sweep and entwines political theory with the personal doing justice to both. It also traces the forces of disintegration in the movement as well as in the humans involved in it, but it has been successful in creating two very unforgettable characters: Sarah and Beatie. Sarah gains a certain tragic height in her absolute refusal to accept defeat and Beatie is the village peasant girl who finally finds her own voice. They are characters one would not be able to forget in a hurry.

Notes

1. Arnold Wesker, *The Wesker Triology,* (London: Penguin Books, 1959), 13. All subsequent quotations have been taken from the above edition and have been incorporated in the text.

2. John Osborne, *Look Back in Anger,* (3rd ed. 1960; London: Faber and Faber, 1983), 9.

3. Glenda Leming, *Wesker the Playwright,* (London: Metheun, 1983) 24.

4. www.library.csi./new woman.html.

5. Elizabeth Lady stanton, "Anniversary of the National Women Sufferage Association," *Revolution,* May 19, 1870, 306, quoted by William L. O'Neill, *Everyone was Brave,* 2nd ed.(New York: The New York Times Book Co., 1971) 21.

6. Robert Blood, "Employment of Married Women," *Journal of Marriage and the Family,* xxvii (February 1965), 43-44.

7. Michelene Wandor, *Look Back in Gender* (London: Metheun, 1987). 19.

8. Lemming, *Wesker the Playwright*, op. cit., 43.

9. Lemming, *Wesker the Playwright*, op. cit., 42.

10. Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 24.

11. Arnold Wesker, *The Wesker Triology*, op. cit.,105.

12. Ronald Hayman, *Contemporary Playwrights: Arnold Wesker*; (London: Heinmann, 1970) 147.

13. Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama* (New York Cambridge: University press, 1992) 118.

14. Carol Gilligan, *Contemporary Playwrights* (London: Arnold Heinemann, 1985) 19.

15. A.D Choudhuri, *Contemporary British Drama* (London: Arnold Heinemann, 1976) 147.

16. Michelene Wandor, *Look Back in Gender* ,op.cit., 43.

17. Ibid., 55.

18. Ibid., 55

Lessing and the New Woman

Doris Lessing is one of the most prolific writers today and also one of the most read. She has always been very vocal and has tried to free herself of the label of being a feminist. Once when questioned whether her writing is specifically related to women she replied, "Not at all. I just write from the viewpoint of women because I am one. I write...[rather] about the map of the human mind"[1] and goes on to add that "Sex war is not the most important war going on, nor is it the most vital problems in our lives." Time and again she has been accused of abandoning feminist concerns. This irks her, as she avers, she never consciously wrote from a feminist point of view.

Doris Lessing is more widely known for her novels, but she also wrote two plays that were highly acclaimed on the stage. These plays however escaped the critics' notice. The first one *Each His Own Wilderness* was written in 1959 and the other *Play with a Tiger* in 1962. *Each His Own Wilderness* is the story of Myra who dedicates her life for her social ideals, but in the end comes to term with the bitter realization that her own son is indifferent to her politics. This play is therefore a sensitive portrayal of a woman's suffering, her agony and her loneliness. In the author's note to the play she wrote that the play "came out of

watching the conflicts, listening to the arguments between a political mother and her apolitical son".[2]

As the play opens, we see Tony, a young man of twenty-two, back home after finishing his National Service. This play deals with the powerful, and volatile mother-son relationship, that is on the brink of a conflict. Myra, the mother, like Sarah Kahn, is a political activist, working for the ideals and values that she holds dear. She is whole-heartedly involved in seeking the banning of the H-Bomb and works energetically towards that end. Tony the son, on the other hand demands total allegiance from her and this becomes the basic cause of conflict.

Though twenty-two, Tony hardly behaves like a mature grown-up male. In the stage-directions, he is described as sexually ambiguous resembling "... an adolescent girl who makes herself attractive as a form of self-assertion but is afraid when the attention she draws is more than gently chivalrous"(p.88). Michelene Wandor believes, "this suggests that Tony's bearing carries ambiguous implications for appropriately gendered behaviour"[5]. His actions prove the fact. Almost like a child his favourite pastime is making a gun with his hands and sounding gun sounds with his mouth. He would like his mother to close his eyes and shout 'Pekaboo'.

In certain ways Tony resembles Jimmy Porter. Like Jimmy it seems he is without a cause. It appears a mammoth job appeasing him, because one can never figure out what he exactly wants. He is a mixture of contradictions, "fluctuating between the good manners of those who use manners as a defense, the abrupt rudeness of the very young and a plaintive, almost querulous appeal' (p.87). Like Jimmy, he too shuttles between sexual longing and loathing. He hates women and yet adores them and longs to be with them. Like him again, he believes that he is born out of his times, though he would not even lift his little finger to alter the times. However, whereas Jimmy grumbled because there was no action, Tony resents as there is too much of it. For him women become "utterly intolerable" because of their "utterly appalling vitality. They exhaust me."(p.107)

As soon as he reaches home, he looks around and the disorder is enough to irritate him. He exclaims, "What a mess. God, what a mess!"(p.87). The very first sentence, is indicative of the fact that there is going to be a conflict. Quite early in the play, Tony makes it clear that he would not like to budge an inch from his stance and that no compromises are to be expected from his side. Myra the mother, on the other hand, too wants to live in her own way. In answer to Tony's "Why is everything in such a mess, Mother?" she is quick to answer, "Oh, I haven't time. I get bored with all these things. They just accumulate and pile up..."(p.112).

Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* showed how the chief institution of patriarchy is the family and says:

> "this is a patriarchal unit within a patriarchy that serves as the agent of a larger society and controls and ensures conformity where political and other authorities are insufficient. The Patriarchal state rules its citizens through heads/males who represent authority."

She further elaborates how female heads of household tend to be regarded as undesirable and have little or no relation to the state. Here though the father is absent, yet the son has taken over. Millett declares that family-society-state are interrelated; otherwise, they would fall apart and that the main contribution of the family in patriarchy is the socialization of the young into patriarchal ideology's prescribed attitudes toward the categories of role, temperament, and status. The position of the masculine figure within the family is extremely strong. Another aspect of patriarchy with which Millett demonstrates the arbitrariness of gender roles, temperament, and status is class. She points out that in a society where status depends upon the economic, social, and educational circumstances of class, certain females can appear to stand higher than some males; however, not when one looks more closely at the situation:

> A black doctor or lawyer has higher social status than a poor white sharecropper. But race itself is a caste system which subsumes class, persuades the latter citizen that he belongs to a higher order of life, just as it oppresses the black

> professional in spirit, whatever his material success may be. In much the same manner, a truck driver or butcher has always his "manhood" to fall back upon [...] Incidents from life (bullying, obscene, or hostile remarks) are probably another sort of psychological gesture of ascendancy [...] The existence of sexual hierarchy has been reaffirmed and mobilized to "punish" the female quite efficiently. The function of class or mobilized ethnic mores in patriarchy is largely a matter of how overtly displayed or how loudly enunciated the general ethic of masculine supremacy allows itself to become "

Tony's refusal to accept the disorder is his refusal to accept things as they are. And though he himself would do nothing to clear the mess, he expects his mother to do so. He would like things to change to suit his convenience. It is also an unwillingness to accept reality, which becomes obvious by his refusal to let in the glare of sunlight, preferring to lie in the dark. Again he is disgusted and vehemently protests when Myra wants him to hear the tape that she has prepared to convey the horrors and agony of war through various screaming sounds. He is a child who would like to see things as he would like them to be and not as they are, and cries when things don't comply.

When Myra comes back after a demonstration, Tony's greetings are not those of an enthusiastic son eager to see his mother. Rather a feeble "how are you?" emanates from him, that is soaked out of all its vitality. The first scene itself sets the tone that is cynical meant to hurt, "But of course, if my coming is in any way inconvenient to you I'll go away" (p.88), he specifies.

Not one of Myra's beliefs and not one of her gestures are acceptable to Tony as none of her friends are. He talks ironically of all the male friends Myra has or had in the past and refers to them as his 'uncles'. "I've had so many uncles. Well Uncle Sandy?" (p.99), he comments sardonically to Sandy, who is Myra's secretary to drive home the point. The conflict becomes so engrained as time passes that both of them "stare at each other as enemies"(p.91), and so profound that Myra at times even has to suppress her "maternal instincts"(p.89). He sneers at "the glorious battle for socialism inside the Labour party' commenting: "We need a new form of - inner emigration. Drugs, drink, anything. I want to opt out. I don't want any part of it" (p.89). Every motive of the mother is at once looked at with suspicion. "Who is it upstairs," he questions and when Myra off handily replies "Sandy", he stares at her as if she is a culprit:

TONY: But he is my age.

MYRA: What of it?

TONY: He's my age, He's 22.

MYRA: I didn't ask to see his birth certificate when I engaged him.
(I.i, p.90)

Tony is a pessimist. He sees humanity as stupid and prefers to see ~~that~~ the horrors of the bomb as inescapable. He can not even appreciate his mother's efforts, who is at least trying to achieve something. On the contrary, he demands that she should give up the fight since he sees it as futile. He would like to shut his doors to the outside world and remain cloistered in the house, which is a false solace that he has built around himself. His childish thinking cannot comprehend why anybody should be tortured by "something happening thousands of miles away"(p.104). This naturally clashes with Myra's total commitment to her work, and her wider concern for the victims of the bomb that impels her to seek its banning. As any individual eager to preserve her identity and total commitment to work, Myra is certainly not willing to make compromises as far her work is concerned. She asserts herself on this count:

MYRA: I am not going to become a sort of monument to your desire for -- whatever it is.

TONY: Dignity.

MYRA: If you call it dignity sitting with your hands folded waiting to be blown up. Well, I'm not going to be blackmailed into inertia. (II,ii,p.160)

Tony does not approve of Myra and her work because being a firm believer of patriarchy he believes that it is the male of the species who are

supposed to have qualifications like aggression, intelligence and efficiency whereas women are supposed to be passive, ignorant, docile and virtuous. As Myra does not fit the bill, she is unacceptable.

The language used by Tony for Myra is foul and full of contempt. Milly, a friend of Myra is shocked that anyone could use such language for one's mother. He labels the 'box' in which Myra and her other co-workers are in as "the dilettante daughters of the revolution" and then adds with a scorn "Oh they're women who haven't succeeded in getting or staying married" (p.101), thus indirectly hinting that a woman's rightful place is her home. At times his language becomes obscene and is meant to hurt:

> It's going to be such a jolly night. Imagine it- Rosemary and Uncle Philips in one bed ... Then there's mother. Will it be Sandy or Uncle Mike, do you suppose? Why not both?...Or they might have a little change in the middle of the night. Mother and Uncle Philip- for old times sake...
> (II, I, .p.147)

As soon as Tony is back Myra becomes aware that she shall no longer be able to live life her way. She knows that many sacrifices would be demanded of her if she has to fit in her son's agenda of things. When questioned by her son if it is necessary to swear, she replies, "Well now that you're home, I suppose I'll have to stop" (p.71).

In *Each His Own Wilderness* the husband is absent, but however patriarchy is not. Myra craves of the son's approval in the absence of the husband. She tries her best to make him understand the indispensability of her work so that he might appreciate what she's doing and working for. Whenever Tony's voice softens a little, she enthusiastically "responds like a little girl who has been praised" (p. 92). She tries to tell Tony that efforts are important because otherwise things could have been worse. Tony refuses to believe that Myra's work could do any good "how could they possibly be worse? How could they?" (p.92). Her efforts are outright rejected as 'childish' "They talk as if they really believe what they do changes things. You know, five thousand people listen to a speech and everything will be changed" (P.140).

The predicament that Myra faces is that she wants to keep her individuality intact and that is hard to do, if you are a woman. In 1935 Margaret Mead voiced the same concern. She had shown how difficult it is for a woman to be an individual at the same time. One either proclaims oneself a woman and therefore less an achieving individual or an achieving individual and therefore less a woman. "If she chooses the first option, she enhances her opportunity of being a loved object, the kind of girl, whom men will woo, boast of, toast and marry. If she selects the second however, she is lost as a woman her chance for the kind of love she wants"[5]

Myra has opted for the second option and therefore in spite of being surrounded by various people she is lonely. She does not even qualify for her son's approval. All her well-meaning gestures are interpreted wrongly by him. All she asks of him is to grow up, to stop behaving like a child of five and to live independently since he is twenty-two, complete his education and see life for himself. But this is clearly not acceptable to Tony. She sells the house so that he might have sufficient money to pursue whatever he wants to. Instead she is persecuted by him and he raises quite a hue and a cry saying she has given away the only thing he found solace from. Sometimes it becomes so unbearable for Myra that she literally begs from her own son to have some pity on her:

> MYRA: (*breaking down and crying for a few seconds before pulling herself together)* : Tony, have some pity on me sometimes. (I,ii,p.116).

No wonder she finds him 'impossible'. She can do nothing much but helplessly cry out her heart, failing to decipher what he really wants.

Apparently Myra and Milly look to be free women as they do not have husbands to cater to. Myra is a widow and Milly a divorcee. Hence they do not have to mould their lifestyles to suit their husbands' convenience. But in reality they are still quite caged. In patriarchy when there is no husband to boss over the wife then the son becomes the substitute master. One is reminded of Manu's advice which stands equally

adopted by the western Society which says: "In childhood let her remain under the control of the father, under the control of the husband in youth; and under the control of the son after the demise of her lord in old age. A woman must not assume independence under any circumstances whatever"[20]. Tony plays the role of the substitute husband quite effectively. He bubbles with sarcasm and ironical bitterness. What he demands is a total surrender. He wants the mother's individuality surrendered to the point where the woman remains no more than a possession. And in the play as in a patriarchal setup all sacrifices come in the woman's share:

> MYRA: ... I was going to go with those people to the testing area for the bomb. You know. Well Tony was terribly upset. I was so happy. I was under the impression that he would mind if I got killed. Then he said, "Mother, for God's sake have a sense of proportion." Then I understood. It wouldn't have been respectable. That was what he minded. It wouldn't have been respectable. *(laughs. Almost breaks down)*(II,I, p.134)

Tony has an almost obsessive desire always to see his mother with a made-up face. Like a proper patriarch he echoes man's wider desire to see women as 'painted dolls'. This aspect relates to the theme of the female body-image and the dominance on it of the male gaze. Coward refers to this dominance when he avers:

> "In this society, looking has become a crucial aspect of sexual relations, not because of any natural impulse, but because it is one of the ways in which domination and subordination are expressed. The relations involved in looking enmesh with coercive beliefs about appropriate sexual behaviour for men and women." [a] (Rosalind Coward, Female Desire:women's sexuality today, Pladin, 1984,p.76)

This male gaze wields a power and it is apparent also in other areas besides personal relationships, for example in the images of women produced by the media. The proliferation of visual representations of femininity, makes the woman anxious. Tony's insistence points to this obsession."Why don't you at least make up your face?" (p.115), "I can't stand it, seeing you stop around the house half the day looking like that" (p.154) and "...for heaven's sake put some lipstick on at least" (p.154) are the protests lodged on and off. And Myra's plea "When I'm cleaning the stairs, I expect to be loved for being myself" (p.115) highlights a woman's carving for acceptance for what she really is, sans the make-up.

Another aspect that the play ponders on is how much sexual freedom a woman can possibly enjoy. Both Myra and Milly are single, but they do not have any satisfying love experience. Myra has been thrown out by Philip, and worse he wants Myra to put up Rosemary, the girl he says he is to marry, with her for a few days. Ironically as this news is conveyed by the son it hits where it hurts the most. Myra is furious with

Philip, jealous of Rosemary and sorry for herself, yet she hides all these emotions. "Do you imagine after putting such a good show with Philip all this time I'm going to behave like a jilted 16-year old?"(p.173) she asks. Hiding one's emotions and feelings becomes a necessity, when mutual understanding is lacking.

Myra has come to realize that men are 'dishonest'. This dishonesty is inherent in Philip as he does not even want to marry Rosemary and is looking for ways to dump her. But he lacks the basic honesty and courage to tell her this himself. He uses none other but Myra to get rid of Rosemary. "He never did have any guts. I was maneuvered into a position where I had to break it off or lose self-respect. And that's what he's doing with her." (p.114) Philip brings Rosemary to Myra so that she is thoroughly "lost and humiliated" (p.115) that reveals how "hypocritical" men can be to get their own ends. Philip is one of those skilled at the art. One woman is made use of to get of the other.

Communication between the two sexes again is conspicuous by its absence. This is hardly surprising, as communication and sharing comes with understanding, and it is this understanding that is conspicuously lacking in *Each His Own Wilderness*. The son never approves of anything that the mother does, therefore she cannot communicate easily with him. It is from Sandy that Tony learns that his mother wants him to complete his studies. He is irked by this second hand

communication and just then Mike walks in to again inform him just that, so that the communication gap is made to look all the more wider and obvious. Myra has to seek Milly's help to communicate to her son that the house has been sold. When asked why she doesn't tell him herself, she answers "because I can't talk to him" (p.138) Again it is an outsider Mike, who informs Tony that his mother is unwell. So self-centered, self-absorbed and occupied is he with his own inconsequential talk, that he cannot even observe this much.

Myra is a woman who has seen suffering. Her husband was killed in an air raid and she was left alone to fend for herself and her son. Dedicated to her work and her beliefs, she works wholeheartedly for them. But she like Milly, has reached a stage where she finds it difficult to continue the fight and the loneliness of it all engulfs her. As the plays draws to an end, she is like Sarah Kahn, the only one who still clings to the old faith when almost everyone around her has given up. "Half the people I knew," she laments in front of Philip, "people who have spent all their lives fighting and trying to change things, they've gone inside their homes and shut their doors and gone domestic and comfortable and safe." (pp.109-10). And then she is questioned. Philip is the first one to do that

> "Why don't you recognize the fact that we've had it? We've served our purpose." (p.121)

and then she is taken to task by none other but her own son who labels his mother as "corrupt".

> "You set my teeth on edge. You're corrupt. You're sloppy and corrupt. I'm waiting for that moment when you put your foot down about something and say you've had enough." (p.114)

Like Ronnie Kahn and Jimmy Porter, Tony believes it is his moral right to constantly accuse Myra:

> Dreams, dreams, dreams ... what are the words - don't say I've forgotten them, they've been stuffed down my throat all my life - liberty, democracy, brotherhood - and what's the other one? Ah, yes, comradeship, that's it. A world full of happy brothers and comrades. (I, ii, p.124)

As if this is not enough the invectives go on. He levels accusations at her for being destructive, that reminds one of Jimmy Porter:

> "You're destructive, destructive, destructive. There's isn't anything you touch which doesn't go to pieces. You just go on from mess to mess... You live in a mess like a pig, mother... you're all over everything like a great crawling spider..." (p.164).

One wonders at the authenticity of the statement because all her life it is destruction that Myra had been fighting against.

Eventually so sick does Myra become of the whole affair that she is ready to make any amount of sacrifices just to bargain for peace. She gives up all her male friends and a prospective husband. Her personal social life is compromised to a large extent but the son is still not

appeased. When Mike's proposal is rejected the very next day of its acceptance, the son ironically asks his mother why she had done that. He is not even ready to acknowledge that the sacrifice was made because of him. And it turns out it is Tony rather than Myra who is the destructive one. He is responsible for Myra breaking up with all her past acquaintances and the one who actually splits Myra's personality.

A woman's need for sharing is realised only by another woman. Myra finds it impossible to interact with Tony, hence pines for Milly to be back when the latter is away. It is the feminist idea of sisterhood that believes that only a woman is able to understand another woman. The idea of sisterhood involves a clear sense of solidarity and collective consciousness. Myra expresses this wish:

> MYRA: I do wish Milly would come back.
>
> TONY: Why?
>
> MYRA: She's so kind.
>
> TONY: Kind, kind! You've got Sandy, haven't you? Isn't Sandy kind?
>
> MYRA: You're a lot of savages. (I, ii, p.117)

When Milly does turn up, Myra is elated at the news. That her need for sharing would now be fulfilled is evident by the exuberance that she shows. She avers enthusiastically, "Tell me about everything. Come and sit down and talk." (p.126) Both Myra and Milly are finally able to

have a heart to heart talk. They can easily sympathize with each other and they can readily identify with each other's problems. This comes from a mutual understanding that is inherent in their relationship, but lacking in their relationships with men. In front of others and also with her own son, Myra had to hide her tears always fearful of showing her real feelings and emotions, but she is not scared of doing so in front of Milly. The embarrassment leaves her and her feelings pour out in tears that she finds no need to hide. The two women can easily approach, understand and sympathize with each other as they are leaving their made-up selves behind and it is certainly better and easier to approach the other without any masks on.

The idea of sisterhood fell under the purview of the women's liberation movement of the 1960's and 70's Originally it signified a sense of solidarity, but in reality what is shared is a sense of grievance and anger at the oppression and analysis of being a woman in a society dominated by men. Within this category of behaviour, 'sisterhood' becomes a bond of self conscious unity that results from the experience of being exploited and the will of sharing a conscious commitment to change. Sisterhood is generally regarded by feminists as providing both a refuge from and a challenge to the oppressive facets of a patriarchal society. These ideas formed the very foundation of the radical feminist movement of the early 1970s. Women here strove to achieve political solidarity by focusing on

the common aspects of female experience. Consciousness- raising in the small group, as Eisentein explains,was instrumental in achieving this goal:

> Through consciousness-raising women sought to identify and to develop the qualities that united them, across the boundaries set by social categories: mothers with nonmothers; heterosexual women with lesbians; white women with women of colour; and privileged women with poor women. Ultimately, it was thought, the condition and experience of being female would prove to be more important in defining women than the specifics of our differences from one another.[9]

And when the two women sit and share a rather sad realization dawns upon them and it is when they discover that "one can't walk on one's sons" .

Tragically therefore motherhood that apparently looks to be self-satisfying and a prerogative of women is actually a hindrance to her realizations as an individual. Women's reproductive capacities make them vulnerable to male control and raising a child is often a painful and burdensome experience. The mother-child relationship as in such cases no longer remains an affectionate bond, but rather a rope that limits the radius of movement and hence the mother's freedom. Motherhood is another handicap in the path of women's liberation. In patriarchy every woman is a mother by definition. A mother is seen as the source of reproduction the

biological children of patriarchy and the material goods of patriarchal culture. Through motherhood, patriarchy continuous the structure in which female is kept in the service of male. Therefore, motherhood is oppressive. As Chodorow asserts:

> Women's maternal role has profound effects on women's lives, on ideology about women, on the reproduction of masculinity and sexual inequality, and on the reproduction of particular forms of labor power...Women's mothering determines women's primary location in the domestic sphere and creates a basis for the structural differentiation of domestic and public spheres. But these spheres operate hierarchically. Kinship rules organize claims of men on domestic units, and men dominate kinship. Culturally and politically, the public sphere dominates the domestic, and hence men dominate women...Both, sexual division of labor and heterosexual marriages, reproduce gender as an unequal social relation [i]

The next realization is even worse. It is the realization that a woman might not even want to break the chain of motherhood that binds her. In most cases it becomes her weakness because of the motherly emotions in her and men can at any time cash on those emotions. Doris Lessing in fact was the predecessor of the feminist attitude towards

motherhood that found its voice around 1970. In that period to quote Eisenstein, "that feminism and motherhood were in diametrical opposition had seemed almost axiomatic"[6]. Theorists presented the bearing and rearing of children as a form of drudgery. They held them culpable for keeping women tied to the home, thus preventing them from participating in the public sphere of paid employment. Socialist feminists thought of ways and means to liberate women from the practice and ideology of motherhood. Mitchell recommended collective childcare and abortion on demand.

Another point that the play focuses on is that a man's need for getting not staying married is totally different from that of a woman's. Love and care certainly have no place in his agenda of things. A man's idea of his wife is totally utilitarian, coupled with the idea of seeing the woman as a reproductive agent. Philip married, as Myra recollects, twenty-three years ago and had gone to his wife only when he needed a 'nice rest'. His wife is referred to as the "good woman"(p.114). This is a result because down the centuries women have been cast in a set image and this image has always been embedded deep down in the male sub-consciousness.

> "She lived like a nun on a mountain peak, forgiving him his sins..."(p.114).

The woman was acceptable as long as she catered to the image. As soon as this dawns upon Myra, she rejects Philips and rightfully tells him,

"You cast me in the role long enough. You want me to be the quiet woman waiting to welcome you home. But I wouldn't forgive you."(p.143). But as she does not fit in the role prescribed for her, neither is she acceptable to him. He wanted Myra to be a nun and a 'quiet woman', and he couldn't stand the way Myra gives herself away to everybody and everything. Then he experiments with Rosemary to see if she would fit in. However she too is rejected. The spider-fly analogy for Philip and Myra is apt and striking. Like a spider, Philip is always on the look out for a new fly that he can trap, suck its fluids out and then reject.

Like Myra, Milly too, has had her share of sad experiences leading to the realization that she had all along been seen just as a possession. She has walked out of the relationship with Jack the man to whom she was betrothed. They were supposed to get married on Monday and she had spent the whole Friday cleaning the cottage, Saturday cooking dinner for ten, and Sunday organizing the vegetable garden. On Sunday Jack was off playing golf and Milly was left behind as she had work to do, a situation reminiscent of *Look Back in Anger* where there is no rest for the woman even on Sundays, when the men are relaxing. After all the hard work that she puts up all that she gets at the end of the day is a lollipop:

> "He came back from his golf and gave me a nice kiss. Reward for hard work as it were" (p.133).

Jack didn't mind Milly working so hard for three days but he is suddenly in a tizzy, when Mr. Stent, the assistant manager comes in. He then asks

Milly to quickly put on some make up so as to look presentable. When she tries to drive home the fact that she had been working she is precisely told:

" But darling it will make such a bad impression."

Milly sadly realizes that all through she has been nothing but a beautiful body for Jack. She has always been a possession and never been viewed as an individual by him. As soon as she becomes aware of the fact, she leaves him and to make him realize, she leaves him a bill charging him for all the services rendered to him.

All men (except Mike) one comes across in the play are cold and calculated. Sandy too belongs to the same group as he can use his own mother to further his petty ends. Milly knows her son so well "My Sandy'll always fall in love where it does him good" (p.132). Tony's attitude towards Milly is no less disgusting. In Act II, sc.ii, after the sexual encounter Milly appears detestable to him. He wants her to wear some clothes and closes his eyes as he is not able to bear the sight of her. His need is that of a 'sleeping beauty', not breathing, living individual "You lay in my arms all night. You were perfectly sweet. And now..."(p.150). And then as if he has made some compromise or a sacrifice, Tony acts heroic, "Oh, don't worry about my reputation please"(p.159). Milly is amazed at this false chivalry, "Why do you consider yourself compromised?" She questions. When he questions at the word 'love', she is hurt and realizes she is just been made 'use of'. Women are made use of because their emotions. It is usually because of these emotions that they become so

vulnerable and prone to exploitation. And these very emotions are then mocked at by men. "Therapy for soul trouble, a man's arms." (p.125).

The constant recurrent rejections leave Myra a totally disintegrated personality. Philip says he cannot stand her. Tony too tells her the same thing, so that she grows so unsure of herself that she even asks Mike, "Can you stand me Mike? Can you stand me?"(p.145). She is finally reduced to a total mental wreck laughing and crying at the same time..

Myra is alone and alienated at the end of the play. In her endeavour to appease her son, she finds that she has lost all her friends, but the son still remains unappeased. She asks Tony to help her with the tape, "Will you or won't you? If not I'll ring up ..." (p.160). She stops at this point as she realizes there is no one she can call up, "It seems at the moment that there's no one I can ring up. At least not with dignity" (p.161). And the realisation is so appalling that she cannot but "burst into tears"(p.161).

In spite of the freedom granted to the woman, Myra nevertheless remains alone and friendless. She sees the fact that all along she had hardly been living life her own way and that it had been dictated by the demands of the son. The son becomes a surrogate husband in the absence of the latter. By the end of the play Myra has had enough. She

makes it clear to Tony: "It occurs to me that for the last twenty-two years my life has been governed by yours-- by your needs... And what for... (contemptuously) what for- a little monster of egotism - that's what you are. A petty envious, spiteful egotist, concerned with nothing but yourself" (II,ii.p.165). Finally Myra swallows in the hard fact that it is impossible to get along with Tony. Hence she decides to leave him for good, with the brave assertion, "I'm free", though one doubts the degree of freedom the woman would be able to enjoy in this patriarchal set up. And the freedom has come after paying a heavy price. She has to leave her own home to be free. Realization of a woman's individuality is not possible while staying within the present family setup.

The other play that Lessing wrote *Play with a Tiger*(1962) provided a model for feminist drama in the sixties, and it was in the words of Helene Keyssar "a singular and treasured gift" Its protagonist Anna bears a close resemblance to the protagonist of her novel *The Golden Notebook*. It is a direct exploration of an "adult woman's tensions between her images of herself as just a little ordinary girl who wants to be married and a woman who refuses to manacle herself to a man has a poignant appeal for any contemporary woman struggling with her own ambivalence"[10].

In the introduction to the play Lessing specified that the play is about "rootless de-classed people who live in sitting rooms or small

flats or the cheaper hotel rooms and such people are usually presented on the stage in a detailed squalor of realism, which to my mind distracts attention from what is interesting about them"[11].

Both the protagonists of the play, Anna and Tom are in their mid thirties. Tom is a middle class Englishman who is on the point of taking a job as business manager of a woman's magazine. As the play opens, it is apparent that they are in the middle of an argument and as a result both are "tense, irritated and miserable."(p. 6) Anna is upset as she is not very happy by the turn their relationship is taking. She laments that she has hardly been able to see Tom during the last two weeks and has repeatedly been told by his assistant that he is out whenever she has tried contacting him. The very beginning sets the tone of things to come. Anna has chosen to live alone and she is aware of the loneliness that accompanies it. She admits to herself her desire for and pleasure in men but she has decided to forego all that because of the kind of complicated woman that she is. *Play with a Tiger* transcends other plays because it is not just the "strength and vulnerability" of the main character that is traced out but as Lessing herself said her intent was not only to lead the audience to "acknowledge a kind of woman who rarely appears on stage but to assault the stage itself and the greatest enemy of theatre... realism"[12].

Anna Freeman is a free and an independent woman and the name is quite suggestive. Tom wants Anna to accompany him to the

Jeffries whose job offer he is about to accept. Anna doesn't have a very high opinion of the Jefferies as she finds them boring, phony and stupid, a opinion also agreed upon by Tom till the time that he had eventually made up his mind to take up the job offer. Anna doesn't want him to accept it as she feels once he takes up the offer, he'd be in the rat race stuck in the rut and bound hand and foot to the grindstone. Tom accuses Anna of his own disabilities and wants that she too should have a regular job now that he has one. Not relenting however Anna sticks to her guns and reaffirms that she's "free to live as she likes." Tom then wastes no time in reminding her that she has a duty towards her son. Woman thus is reminded of her femininity and motherhood is thrust upon her to bind her to domesticity. Realizing this Anna laments, "Always stick the knife in as hard as you can into a person's weakest spot.' (P.9) Motherhood is again talked about when Janet Stevens arrives. She is an American and has been having an affair with Dave. In contrast to Anna, Janet holds conventionally feminine views. For her a marriage is no less than a career and she doesn't mind Dave making fun of her because she took domestic science homecare and childcare as subjects in college. She says, "I believe marriage and family are the most rewarding career a woman can have"(p.22). After the philosophical talk centering around importance of family and marriage Janet quickly admits to the real reason for her arrival and it is because she is pregnant with Dave's child. Janet epitomizes the plight of a woman. She is pregnant, but feels guilty of the fact and is in a dilemma whether she should let Dave know. She is also apprehensive that Dave might view the

whole thing as a trap. Janet has come searching for Dave as he has simply disappeared and she thinks Anna would know of his whereabouts. Looking at Anna one is reminded of Alison and how she found it so difficult to convey to her husband the fact that she was pregnant.

In *Play with a Tiger* both male and female characters fall in love. But the difference in their attitude is appalling. The female characters in the play, Anna, Mary and Janet, have varying attitudes towards marriage. Anna is clear about her priorities. She is economically independent and hence feels she does not have to get married for security. "I don't have to sell myself out."(p.16). In one of the flashbacks Anna recollects how she had refused Jack's proposal of marriage. Marriage according to her, is a bondage and she prefers to keep her choices open. "You aren't the world Jack," she tells him "... All right then I'll be unhappy, but I want a choice." (p.32). Again in another of her flashbacks, when she is standing on the porch of her house after a quarrel with her mother as a young girl, she has her mind already made up "I am not going to be like you ma, I'm not... You're stuck here. You never think of anything but me and my brother and the house..." Anna as a young girl, makes her choice very early in life, when apparently the only choice offered to women was to get married and have children. Anna doesn't hold marriage in high esteem partly because she has seen the treatment meted out to women in this arrangement but partly also because she is a career woman. But at no point in the play does she attempt to mask her

feeling. She is truthful and her views are known to all the men who come in contact with her. When Dave proposes, she minces no words in telling him, "The wedding would be the last I'd see of you- You'd be off across the world like a dog with a fire cracker tied to its tail.' (p.42) To Dave's query whether this negative attitude is because of a broken marriage, she replies in the negative and calls it rather a "stable and well integrated" marriage in the worldly sense. She then stands up and shuddering at the very thought, recollects how her mother, who was quite talented and a gifted pianist could never touch a piano once she (Anna) was born. "My father never earned as much money as he thought life owed him ... My mother got more and more garrulous. In a word she was a nag. My father got more and more silent..." Thus the fact that marriage does nothing to further a woman's career or her talent and the resentment is well brought out. Further in a psycho analytic session, Anna analyses her parents' marriage and how insecure and incomplete they both felt within it. "The highest emotion they ever knew was a sort of ironic compassion... the compassion of one prisoner for another." (p.48) Ever since she was nine, Anna had analyzed the so called stable marriages of her parents, her friends and her neighbours and it was enough for her to make up her mind that she shall have nothing to do with marriage. "I swore to God... I said God if I go down in loneliness and misery; if I die alone somewhere in a furnished room in a lonely city that doesn't know me- I'll do that sooner than marry as my father and mother were married."(p.48) She sees them not as individuals growing together and complementing one another each

retaining their individuality, but rather as the jailed and the jailor, "living together, talking to themselves and wandering what happened that made them strangers" (p.49). At a later stage she ponders over the phrase "settle down" in marriage which she believes is literally true as far as the woman is concerned.

Janet on the other hand provides a complete contrast "I'm just an ordinary girl and I want to be married." (p.23) Then there is Mary who shares a room with Anna and is more often the butt of jokes with the men. Both Tom and Harry show concern over the fact that she is unmarried. What they can't comprehend is that any woman would choose to remain a spinster, something that Anna not only fully understands but also justifies. "Strange as it might seem to you, she doesn't want to get married just for the sake of getting married" (p.18), she justifies. Harry and Tom are at loggerheads but when it comes to marry both resound the same opinion that Mary should marry "the first clot who comes along."(p.18) to which Anna replies "perhaps she prefers to be sex starved than to marry an idiot which is more than can be said about most men."(p.18). Then there is Helen who does not actually appear in the play but is often talked about. She is Harry's wife and the "forgiving woman" whose husband goes around flirting with one woman after another and she is supposed to forgive and forget. It is no surprise then that Helen is held in higher esteem than Anna. Patriarchy has always made sure that women remain biologically and psychologically dependent on men .Lundburg and

Farham declared that "the desire to be mother constituted the key to sexual pleasure and the culmination of the sex act actually occurred when the mother nursed the child who had been conceived"[13].

These women are pitted against three men-Tom, Dave and Harry. According to Dave, marriage and family are no longer adequate compensation for the alienation of America. "You look at us and you see prosperity – and loneliness – prosperity and men and women in trouble with each other. Prosperity and people wondering what life is for,," He has no qualms about making use of one woman to get rid of the other. Janet Stevens is pregnant with his child, but he wants none of the responsibilities associated with fatherhood. "I'm going to stand for you the mother of the world, the eternal conscience. I like women but I'm going to like them my way and not according to the rules laid down by the incorporated mothers of the universe." (p.28) Janet Stevens is obviously no good for him though he did not think so when he was having an affair with her and got her pregnant. "How the hell could I marry her? She wouldn't understand a word I ever said for a start."(p.43) Anna knows Dave's attitude, therefore she has categorically ruled out marriage. She knows she shall be left to herself the moment she marries Dave. She identifies Dave's disillusion as embodied in a fear of female sexuality:" She's that terrible woman in your comic papers- a great masculine broad shouldered, narrow hipped black booted blonde beastess, with a whip in one hand and a revolver in the other. And that's why you're running.

She's after you --- as she's after every male American I've see."(p.40) She further contends that the war between sexes "is the only clean war left. It's the only clean war that won't destroy us all. That's why we are fighting it." These speeches, as Michelene Wandor pointed out are echoes of Jimmy Porter's substitution of the sex war for the class war, but the ideas are articulated here by a woman"[14].

Tom on his part is no better. Anna describes how Tom was living before he met her. "If he ever needed company, all he had to do was to ring up one of the many girls, he knew all of whom were in love with him "the telephone call at bedtime- are you free tonight, Elspeth, Penelope, Jessica? One of them came over, a drink or a cup of coffee, a couple of hours of bed and then a radio taxi home."(p.19)

Thus women are made use of, exploited and then dumped by men. Harry is the worst. He is constantly cheating on his wife. He leaves her everyday and goes around philandering with other women. When asked about his wife, Harry replies in a much used formula, "Oh Helen is wonderful, delightful. She is very happy and loves me dearly."(p.15). For him, the fact that he comes back to his wife is enough and his wife, according to him ought to be thankful for that. Anna knows men too well and therefore snaps back, "You married Helen who was very much in love with you. When she had turned into just another boring housewife and mother you began philandering. She had no alternative but to stay

put." (p.16). Though Harry exploits women to get his own ends, he promises them nothing in return, yet he is dejected the moment any of his girlfriend decides to get married to someone else. His male ego gets hurt and he goes back in this moment of crises to weep on his wife's shoulders and even expects sympathy in return. "She'll forgive him alright. He'll even use her compliance as an additional attraction for the little girls. My wife understands me he'll say with a sloppy look on his face. (p.16) Harry is an ardent follower of Freud for he believes that women are there only for the male's satisfaction. He wishes that there should be more women like Helen and not freethinking, independent ones like Anna. "God in his wisdom has ordained that there should be a certain number of understanding women in the world whose task is to bind up the wounds of men (P.69). Thus for men loving involves lies, hypocrisy and even secrecy, whereas women demand a basic honesty in the relationship. *Play with a Tiger* was also an important play as it was for the first time that anger, frustration and sexual drive as motive forces were shown as strong in women as in men. And the play intrigues one because here anger and sexuality were accepted not only as attributes of realistic characters but also as sources of female power.

Thus though Doris Lessing did not consciously write from the feminist stance, yet she wrote of woman's experience. Literature written by women thus becomes different from that written by men that is invariably male-oriented. As Showalter said that "because of their

educational, experiential, and biological handicaps," women develop their "sympathy, sentiment and powers of observation" to bring the substance and significance of the female experience to readers"[13]. This is also because of a distinctly female vision.

Notes:

1. (http:// www.arlindo.coercia.com.)

2. Doris Lessing, *Each His Own Wilderness* in *Three Plays by Lessing, Halls and Hasting.* (Harmondworth: Penguin, 1968) 87. All subsequent quotations have been taken from the above edition and have incorporated in the text.

3. Michelene Wander, *Look Back in Gender* (London: Metheun, 1987) 50.

4. Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1970) 36.

5. Margaret Mead, "Sex and Achievement," Forum xciv (November 1935) 301-02.

6. Manu, *Manu Smriti*, quoted by Kewal Motwani, *Manu Dharma Shastra,* (Madras: Vasanta Press, 1958) 110.

7. Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproducing of Mothering:Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender,*(London: Metheun, 1989) 311.

8. Hester Eisentein, *Contemporary Feminist Thought* (N.York:Unwin,1975) 69.

9. Eisenstein, op.cit., 131.

10. Helene Keyssar, *Feminist Theatre* (London:Macmillian, 1984),-35.

11. Elaine Showalter,"Towards a Feminist Poetics." *Women's Writing and Writing About Women,* Ed. Mary Jacobus. (London:Croom Helm, 1979), 1382.

12. Keyssar, Ibid., 26.

13. Lundberg and Famham, *Modern Women: The Lost Sex*, p.143. Quoted by William H. Chafe, *The American Woman* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1935) 210.

14. Wandor, Ibid., 51.

15. Elaine Showalter, "Towards a Feminist Poetics." *Women's Writing and Writing About Women.* Ed. Mary Jacobus. (London: Croom Helm, 1979) 1382.

In the words of Elaine Aston "The kinds of questions which Churchill asks through her theatre reflect her feminist and socialist viewpoints, but allied to her interrogative political mode of writing is her experimental approach to dramatic and theatrical form. Churchill's theatre is not just a question of politics, but a politics of style"[3]. Her conclusion are not final endings but a question that she leaves unanswered. "This open-ended format stimulates the audience to think about the answers rather than just identifying with or against the idea generated in the play"[4].

Churchill's main contribution to further the cause of feminists has been in broadening traditional views of gender roles. Feminist critics from areas as diverse as socialist feminism, material feminism, and cultural feminism have claimed Churchill as a representative. Part of what fuelled Churchill's dramatisation of gender in the 1970s was the feminist climate of that decade and her interaction with other feminist writers and practitioners – in particular the socialist- feminist theatre company, Monstrous Regiment. She once asserted, "I've constantly said that I am both a socialist and a feminist"[5]. She strongly holds the view that politically engaged theatre is a vehicle for social change. Her *Objections to Sex and Violence*(1975) was her first play to introduce themes of feminism. In her plays traditional sexual mores, race and power relationships are examined closely and the values set up by the patriarchal society are put up for questioning. Churchill's most important stage

successes, encompassing a remarkable range of subjects, offering provocative viewpoints, and demonstrating continual experiment with the theatrical form, occurred in the 1980s.

Churchill continues to be active as a playwright. She also continues to experiment with theatrical form. She has written several musicals and a number of plays composed of two unrelated but thematically interconnected acts, such as *Blue Heart*(1997)and *Far Away* (2000), in which the conflicts around the world and people's increasing tolerance of inhumanity are discussed. In *Top Girls* she has an interesting method of role assignment. An actor is assigned a particular role and then assigned one or more roles in the remainder of the play. These assignments might look arbitrary, but is in reality perfectly logical. The role assigned is on the basis of their uniting characteristics which become apparent only later. Her plays continue to question gender roles and power relationships in the society, combining political writing with personal experience.

The major theme that Churchill deals with in her works is that of gender politics imposed on individuals by the patriarchal society. Traditional sexual mores, race, and power relationships are examined closely and the values set up by patriarchal society are questioned. Churchill is also interested in time and the possibilities of change.

By laying emphasis on external restrictions of freedom, she shows how aggressive individualism can prevent constructive changes and work against the good of society as a whole. In an interview in *New York Times* she defined her themes as 'power, powerlessness and exploitation; people as longings, obsessions and dreams.'

Churchill also rejected the forms of female equality that merely transforms women into surrogate men. She draws a parallelism between colonialism and sexual oppression and demonstrates this through women who take on male roles, men who play wives and a white actor who plays the part of a black servant. By doing so, she stresses upon the artificiality and conventionality of the characters' sex and race roles. Churchill highlights the argument that changes in the "position of women are artificial because the achievements of women characters appear in two forms; they either succeed through taking roles reserved for men or embody the archetypal feminine qualities as defined by the patriarchal system"[o]. Churchill draws attention to her women characters, who in spite of their apparent rejection of patriarchal structures, remain trapped by patriarchal essentialism regarding archetypes like 'superwoman'

Owners(1976) was Churchill's first professionally produced stage play and is significant for the way in which it highlights gender and class issues that later became central to her theatre in the 1970s and 80s. 'Ownership' of property, people and money is dealt with through the

representation of a property owning (but childless) couple (Marion and Clegg) and their tenants (Alex and Lisa) who are raising a family in reduced poor circumstances. It seeks to overthrow the social contention that dictates that half of the human race performs nothing, but low menial tasks. In an interview to Judith Thurmen she said, "The way people think of the Irish is rather the way men tend to think of women – as charming, irresponsible, poetic creature, which in fact is the sort of stereo-type colonial rulers traditionally have of the Native. You become beautiful because you don't have the power to be direct."[7]

Marion, the wife and the protagonist of the play incorporates all the patriarchal values that are traditionally the prerogative of the male. She is the embodiment of reason, success and power. Marion "moves about a lot" and has a "strong face rather than pretty",[8] the strength here dominates her prettiness, a value generally assigned to the female sex. A rich expert property dealer, she is always in control of situations and events. She can be read as a precursor to her superwoman successor Marlene in *Top Girls.*

Sarah Kahn too, had stepped into the so-called male's forte. She was exuberantly active in politics. But she was differently from Marion. There the woman was still struggling in the male's domain, but she had not discarded the matriarchal values. She was still a loving mother and a caring wife. However Marion retains none of the matriarchal values

of love, care, sacrifice, giving or nurturing. She has whole-heartedly embraced reason, power and success making them the sole guiding principles of her life.

Marion is both mentally as well as physically strong. Clegg her husband, cannot even think of having an "unarmed combat" with her, though he constantly harbors negative feeling in him. Marion echoes all the masculine values when she asserts "be quick, be top, be best" (p.30). "Onward Christian Soldiers" is her favourite song and ever to move onwards and fight for her good, is her motto in life. She has cast all her sentiments, emotions and feelings aside and has learnt not to care for others in the process. In fact, surprisingly, Marion does not have a single quality in her that was traditionally thought to be the woman's. The feminists realized this clear-cut demarcation between a male's and female's roles is to be broken if some sort of equality is to be obtained. Gilman wrote a treatise *Women and Economics* (1898) in which her main contention was that all roles a woman was permitted to play derived from her sexual functions. A man could carry on a variety of activities- build a career, enter politics and join a fraternal organisation. But a woman could only marry and have children. In effect, sex became a female's economic way of life, while "men worked to live... women mated to live..."[9].

Marion however is a character who refuses to be compartmentalized into the chamber labeled as "feminine". She works to

live and refuses to mate to live. Very like a capitalist, who is only bothered with her own gains and achieving only her own end, she avers, "We don't shrink from blood or guilt... I see children with no shoes or socks in the houses I buy. Should I buy them socks? It would be ridiculous" (p.30). So shorn of all the moral values and so materialistic has she become, that she can go to any extent to achieve her ends, not caring an inch for the other person involved. If she wants Alec, she shall have him no matter what the cost: "I don't care if you are mad or sane Alec. I am yours whether you want me or not... We men of destiny get what we're after even if we are destroyed by it. And everyone with us. We split the atom. Onward. Love me" (I, v, p.31). The phrase "We men of destiny" points out that she has become more of a man than a woman. And then comes the assertion that one would hardly expect from a woman "I'm keeping you Alec." (p.32).

Marion is devoid of all the motherly virtues of loving, caring and nurturing yet she wants to keep the baby, for different reasons though. In fact, the baby doesn't matter much to her. To her it is just another piece of property like the houses that she buys. But she has to get it so that she can have another assurance of victory. Lisa, the true mother, is hence right when she tells her," You don't want him really. You just want to win."(p.60). All the piteous begging and all the motherly tears of Lisa are unable to change her mind. They are just able to elicit this response from Marion," I shall do as I like" (p.60). It sounds funny and yet it is true,

when Worsley tells Clegg,"If he gets kidnapped any time and you have to go and identify him you can take me. Marion wouldn't know" (p.38).

Marion is cool, callous and calculating. She is every inch a replica of a successful business executive. Here reason and calculation have replaced emotions and sentiments. Like Jimmy, she is a sadist. Very like a logician, she asks Alec to compare her with Liza and then tries to convince him that she is better for him. She is devoid of all 'feminine' qualities that patriarchy generally assigns to women - sweetness, modesty, subservience, humility etc. One cannot but recall Jimmy's speech of waddling in Alison's tears when she tells Alec, "One day I'll have the pleasure of knowing you're screaming. Even if you do it silently' (p.48). In the light of her character one can hardly believe her when she tells Alec that she loves him and that she would only call for him even if she was eighty.

Both within the home as well as outside, Marion is fully in command. She orders, dictates and metes out punishments. Clegg dares not oppose her or ignore her orders. This reversal of traditional marital roles becomes all the more defined when the wife questions, "Are you going against me."(p.61). And then the warning is sounded, "If you don't like the arrangements, you can go. Clear right off. It would be a delight never to see you again."(p.61). This surprises one because never before had one heard a woman dictating terms to her husband so authoritatively

and never before did we see the husband so meek and submissive. The play puts forward the thesis that so called masculine and feminine values cannot be segregated into water tight compartments. They are purely arbitrary and perpetuated by the larger patriarchal value system. The French feminist Helene Cixous contributed a valuable discussion of the consequences of what she calls "death -dealing binary thought." Under the heading 'Where is She?', she lines up the following lists of binary oppositions:

Activity / passivity

Sun / moon

Culture / nature

Day / night

Father / mother

Head / emotions

Intelligible / sensitive

Logos / pathos

These oppositions correspond to the underlying opposition Man / Woman, and are imbricated in the patriarchal value system; each opposition can be seen as the negative powerless instance. The biological opposition Male / Female, in other words is used to construct a series of negative 'feminine' values which then are imposed on and confused with the female. Cixous then goes on to locate death at work in this kind of division. She shows how, for one of the terms to acquire meaning, it must destroy the other. The 'couple' cannot be left intact. In the end, victory is equated with

activity and defeat with passivity and under patriarchy male is always the victor. 'Either woman is passive or she doesn't exist.'[10] To posit all women as necessarily feminine and all men as necessarily masculine is precisely the move which enables the patriarchal powers to define not feminity, but all women as marginal to the symbolic order and to society. Cixious showed that feminity is defined as lack, negativity, absence of meaning, irrationality, chaos, darkness - in short as a Non-Being. Here in Owners the woman has no 'feminine' values and hence is no longer a 'Non-Being'. While Marion is so completely devoid of emotions and sentiments, Worsley on the other hand is all full of them. He literally begs Marion to let go of the child "Let him go back to where he belongs. You're letting yourself go mad, Marion. I've seen you in pieces..." (p.61). After a while he 'bursts into tears' as if to complete the process of emotional breakdown. But all this generates no effect on Marion, who is past all emotions. Not ready to budge an inch, she asserts:

> I think everyone had their say. None of you has any effect on me. The more you want the baby, the more its worth keeping... Everyone of you thinks I will give in . Because I'm a woman, is it? I'm meant to be kind. I'm meant to understand a woman's feelings wanting her baby back. I don't. I won't. I can be as terrible as anyone. Why shouldn't I be Genghis Khan? Empires only come by killing. I won't shrink...
>
> (II,vi, p.63)

This long, pompous assertive, speech reveals that she is out on a voyage to discover how ruthless and terrible she can possibly be. "I can massacre too" is the constant refrain. Her ruthlessness and callousness are further evident when she is not sorry even for a moment on hearing from Worsley about Alec's death. When it is the woman in control, the men coming in contact with her are not rendered normal. Clegg has an almost obsessive desire to annihilate her and Worsley harbours the perpetual suicidal wish. Michelene Wandor voices the same concern when she says, "A powerful ... woman is matched by two men, one murderous, one suicidal, both ineffective."[11]

The other woman in the play Lisa stands in direct contrast to Marion. Lisa is as conventionally 'feminine' as Marion is 'unfeminine'. The former is the traditional woman to whom things are done to. She is a devoted wife and a caring mother. She is a woman who can get all disturbed over a misplaced engagement ring. "My engagement ring... Help me look... It's my one and only engagement ring and it's gone." (p.13). For Lisa, her husband and her children are the only axis around which she can revolve. When her things are stolen, she finds solace in the fact, "Still I've got the boys, that's what matters. I've got you." (p.20). Like a typical traditional housewife, she is constantly on her toes to please her husband. She can see herself only in relation to her husband and is tormented constantly with the fear that she might be deserted:

ALEC: Yes you must leave me, if you want to.

LISA: I always hate it when you say that to me because what you mean is that you want to leave me.

(I, iii, p.22).

The contrast between Marion and Lisa is thus well marked, the former ordering her husband to leave if he wants to, and the latter fearing she shall be left behind by the husband. Lisa is like Alison of *Look Back in Anger*, who has accepted her husband as he is. Alec is passive and hasn't been to work for the last six months, yet he is acceptable. The consolation is "He is very nice to me all the time," though she fears, "I wonder if he knows who I am. I think he would be nice to anyone. I went to see the doctor about him and he gave me some pills to take myself, but that won't make Alec any better. It just makes me put up with it..." (p.24). Alec and Lisa's marriage is one of those traditional marriages where the woman is always the one making compromises. One can't help noticing the similarities between Lisa and Alison: both have molded themselves to suit the needs of their husbands without any guarantee if ever the husbands are going to change for the better. On the other hand, Marion stands in direct contrast to Lisa. In Marion's case it is the husband who makes all the compromises. Clegg becomes the child's surrogate mother. One sees him doing all the motherly chores, like looking after the baby, heating and cooling his bottles etc., while Marion is off to work. The contrast between Marion and Lisa is again brought out in Act II, Sc.ii where Marion is shown "walking about eating" where as Lisa is in a pitiable state with

"hair a mess, face a wreck, sitting in a chair crying"(p.41). Their positions too - Marion standing, totally in command and Lisa sitting - speak volumes of their attitudes. Lisa is all sentimental about the baby that she has mistakenly signed over to Marion. Her motherly emotions have seized all reason and logic from her. "I don't see that signing a bit of paper makes him hers. He is mine. His blood and everything. His looks..." (p.36). Marion on her part is unruffled about the whole affair. Least affected, she indeed has the demure of a true business executive. Callously keeping all reason intact, she tries to make it clear to the emotional mother the do's and don'ts of the law: "In a third party adoption Lisa, each party sees the third party and all emotion is thus kept out." (p.42).

This complete marginalization of Clegg by the domineering personality of Marion has an adverse effect on him. Here again the power division is in favour of one sex. Such a power division always ends with the oppressed partner hating the oppressor. Clegg is scared of Marion and hence hates her. He can see no life for himself as long as Marion is alive; therefore he is forever contemplating various devices, tools and ways to murder her. He would like to see Marion fit in the traditional role of a submissive housewife. The fear of her however refrains him from giving vent to his feelings or putting his plans into action. He says he has "every respect for the mental profession" (p.10) because he believes the psychiatrist had rightly prescribed that Marion would have been happier had she molded herself to suit her husband's life style and catered to his

demands. Marion would have endeared herself to Clegg, had she indulged only in creative hobbies, painting for example. What is thoroughly unacceptable to the male ego of Clegg, is to see a woman crossing into the threshold of the male domain and making a success of it. Initially he had invested in the first property Marion had bought and had fully recovered his money, but as he says he would not have minded losing the money if "only she would have stayed with painting and had been content" (p.10)

At heart Clegg is still the male chauvinist. He wishes to revert back to the patriarchal set-up and occupy a central place in this power politics. "She can stand on her two feet, which is something I abominate in a woman" (p.8). He fondly cherishes the image of his father up erect with his mother "on her knees" in front of him and his father at times condescending and bending to pick her up "Very gracious... He had his chair. The tea was on the table when he came in" (p.10). This nostalgia is because he himself cannot get from his wife what his father could. Also he has been deprived of the status of the giver as Marion is independent both emotionally as well as financially "everything I had was hers. I always said. She only had to ask" (p.10). Clegg would like to see Marion as a possession. He refuses to believe Worsley when the latter tells him that a wife is a mere possession like cars and horses. She is a living being:

CLEGG: A wife's the same.

WORSLEY : A wife's a person.

CLEGG: First and foremost a wife. One flesh. Marion leaves me... and every morning she leaves me to go to work... and every evening she leaves me, leaves me, leaves me.

(II, I, p.36)

The stress on the words "leaves me" simply shows how strongly the fact of Marion leaving him to go to work has affected him. Clegg hates Marion due to her success and lack of subservience, which wipes out his masculine self-image. Clegg is an unsuccessful butcher who must eventually close his shop, in the face of competition from a nearby supermarket and his wife's career in real estate. He wants to kill the more successful Marion for being the cause of his suffering. When Worsley tells him that she's just a bit absent 'minded' Clegg murder wish comes back. "I will chop her mind into little pieces and blanch them into boiling water"(p.36).Violence therefore emerges as another control mechanism of patriarchy in terms of the formation of gender roles. As Millett argues, that violence is particularly sexual in its character and it takes the form of aggression, hatred, contempt, wife-beating, rape, and the desire to break personality. The rationale underlying this is the belief that women are inferior and dangerous. Unless women meet men's needs, they deserve to be punished, to the most severe degree if necessary.

Marion's dominance is so omnipresent and omnipotent that Clegg starts doubting his manhood. And to assert himself, he invents

various devices. He consoles himself with the thought that at least she bears his name "I look at her sometimes and think I am the one this powerful property dealer swore before God to honor and obey" (p.11). So desperate is he to find some individuality for himself that he tries to act 'manly' in front of Worsley "If I thought for a moment she had dishonored me, then without hesitation or a thought of the police ... I would have killed her"(p.11). One knows however that this is just empty bragging. He does not even have the guts to ask Marion about her affair with Alec, though he is fully aware of it. He tries to cover his meekness and asserting his worth as a man by turning an accident to look like a murder:

CLEGG: I changed a living human being into a carcass.

WORSLEY: Who was it?

CLEGG: I don't know who it was, that's not the point who it was. It was me that did it that's the point.

(II, I, p.37).

As if to assert and prove that he has all the ruthlessness intact Clegg imagines that he could change a living human being into a carcass. He has taken up butchery as a profession so that he can pride himself into believing that he is doing something a woman cannot possibly ~~can~~ "... you still do not see a woman butcher. Apart from the physical weakness, a lady has a squeamishness which is proper in the weaker sex, but shameful in a man..." (p.9).

Marion has alienated herself from Clegg. She is the 'desexed' [12] figure refusing to have sex with the husband or becoming a mother. Clegg on his part avenges his wife's affair with Alec by having a very brutal kind of sex with Lisa. Clegg exhibits Freudian traits in the process. He asserts himself via. his phallus It is the weak feminine woman who becomes the scapegoat of the tussle. She becomes a willing tool because of her motherly emotions that lead to her exploitation. She agrees to it, as she has been promised that she would be able to see her baby afterwards. Ironically afterwards she is refused even that. "Nobody is responsible for what they say in the heat of passion. If I had said at the time, I love you, you wouldn't ever thought I meant it. So if I said anything, it's the same. I don't remember saying anything." (p.53). But the fact is that even if he had wanted to keep his promise he would have found it difficult so scared is he of Marion. "But if I was to give you the baby I wouldn't dare to see her again. I don't care how angry you are, it's nothing like Marion. With Marion it's like a mad person, you don't want her attention to fall on you. It's not something I'd expose myself to." (II, vi, p.54).

Patriarchy works because men have been successful in striking fear in the hearts of women. Marion has become an embodiment of the patriarchal system and hence Clegg dare not oppose her. That is why though he opposes Marion, he can give vent to his feelings only when she is not around. It is ironical to see that when the wife refuses to be bullied, the man finds his target in some other woman. With Marion

refusing to be at his beck and call, he redirects his bragging to Lisa. After the brutal sexual act, he likes to drive home the male supremacy even in sexual terms. "I didn't say you could get up. You wouldn't be suitable unless you lie flat, did you know that, very feminine and do just as you're told. On your back and underneath is where I like to see a lady. And a man on the top. Right on the top of the world. Because I know what you ladies like. You like what I give you. I didn't say you mustn't move at all. But just in response."(II, vi, p.55)

Here Churchill contributes to the debate which was triggered by Freud. In Freudian paradigm, female sexuality is viewed and defined in relation to or in opposition to male sexuality. Luce Irigaray, the French feminist however chooses to differ. She finds fault in the Freudian model which says that female sexuality always relates back to penis and is always coded in terms of reproduction which in turn is also linked to female pleasure and desire. Irigaray says that in this phallogocentric model, the kind of sexuality that gets privileged is one based on looking because the one sexual organ, the penis is visible. According to her, since this is based on the visual it is scopophilic. "They (girls) notice the penis of a brother or playmate, strikingly visible and of large proportions, at once recognize it as the superior counterpart of their small and inconspicuous organ, and from that time forward fall a victim to envy for the penis"[13] Lisa is supposed to be the silent and passive partner in Freudian terms because he believed that a woman gains from being an

(sexual) object of male desire and he would like us to believe that women's pleasure does not reside in the woman herself. In other words, men gain pleasure from sexual intercourse and women gain pleasure from emotional connection and relationship and by being a beautiful object for man's viewing pleasure. Irigaray states that the Freudian notion of asexuality constructs a certain binary opposition. Likewise Freud, Sprenger and Kramer too hold the same views and buttress their treatise with countless authorities primarily the Holy Scriptures and the lives of saints and martyrs. They assert that woman suffer from 'a defect of intelligence' and a 'defect of inordinate passions'. They reinscribe the head/heart, rational/emotional opposition that feminists have for so long attempted to re-envision. The question itself identifies the feminine with the weaker; woman becomes the fragile feminine sex, while men remain just men. Using the comparative mode 'more credulous, more impressionable, feebler' they demonstrate that women are being defined in relation to someone else. Who that someone else is, is obvious because Sprenger and Kramer admit their phallocentrism and say outright "She is more carnal than a man" Clegg also echoes Lundberg and Farham who believed that had been created to be biologically and psychologically dependent on man. According to them "The sex act itself constituted a paradigm for female happiness. During intercourse woman's role was passive, receptive and accepting, based on the recognition that sexual pleasure could come only from welcoming the male phallus."[14]

The oppressor is always hated by the oppressed. Not only does Clegg hate Marion but also hates everything associated with her. So strong is the dislike that he would hardly mind setting fire to her newly acquired house of Alec. He thinks he shall somehow be able to avenge himself that way. But Alec also knows he is not Marion's equal, but her inferior. This knowledge of his inferiority surprises him, when they get identical cards from the character telling machine. Portraying Marion as independent, assertive and successful makes the difference all the more pronounced. If possible he would like to curb her freedom as far as possible. That he does not do so is simply because he cannot. His comparison of her to a 'talking dog' shocks one. It highlights man's greater desire to see woman as a mere possession: "You don't deny she is a wonder. It's like having a talking dog, and it's on the front page at breakfast, the radio at dinner and television at night - that's mine look, that's my clever dog. But a time comes when you say heel. Home. Lie down." (I, I, p.11)

Marion is the completely liberated woman. She has discarded the values traditionally thought to be feminine and learnt to move ahead in the competitive world of business and has inculcated in her all the masculine values. But the play makes one wonder if it isn't just a fantasy of a woman playwright, for such complete reversal of gender roles seem impossible in reality. But it could also be a deliberate attempt to point out that women too can be as decisive, as authoritative, as callous and as cold as men can if only they want to.

Another play that brought Churchill into limelight was *Top Girls*. Ever since it was first staged in London at the Royal Court Theatre on Dec 28, 1982, it was regarded as a unique play that talked about challenges women face in the contemporary business world and society at large. It is still regarded as a part of the canon of women's theatre and helped solidify Churchill's reputation as an important playwright. *Top Girls* is praised for a number of reasons. In it, Churchill explores the price of success paid for by the central character Marlene, while using unusual technique, including a non linear construction, an overlapping dialogue and a mix of fantasy and reality. It was also not without its share of controversies. Written when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister of Britain, the play raises many uncomfortable questions about where the feminist movement was heading at the time and how smoothly were the women adapting to their changing role in society. It left its mark on theatrical practices, traditions, gender stereotypes and socio-economical ideals.

Churchill's choice of title for the play was likewise strategic. It is a culturally available symbol that evokes numerous representations. Like the 'Top Girls Employment Agency' for which it was named the play's title suggests a select few. After all as Win instructs Angie in Act two, scene three: "There are not many top ladies about."[15] But it must be remembered that despite the presence of Lady Nijo and the countless

references to ladies, the play is not called "Top Ladies", a term with courtly overtones. The name *Top Girls* undermines any implication of status or power that would be associated with the phrase 'Top Ladies'. Feminists all over have repeatedly objected to the use of the word 'girls' to refer to women on the grounds that it tends to represent women in narrow, diminutive, frivolous terms. Ironically, while the women in the agency may be at the top and pinnacle of their careers, the fact remains that they are only the best of the women, not the best of everyone. While they may have gone as far as it is possible for women to go, the limitation implicit in the title undermines their accomplishments. Also the word 'top' necessarily implies a middle and a bottom reflecting the social stratification made visible in the play's first act, in the way some women enjoy positions of privilege in relation to other who are deprived. Later using Britain's eminent top girl, Margaret Thatcher, as an example, Joyce demonstrates that merely having a woman in the top position does not ensure equality for all women: "What good's first woman if it's her?" She questions. "I suppose you'd have liked Hitler if he was a woman. Ms. Hitler got a lot done. Hitlerina. Great adventures" (p.138). Mockingly using the feminist title 'Ms'. both to challenge Marlene's notion that 'female' and 'feminist' are synonymous and to suggest that a female prime minister who would behave as brutally and destructively as Hitler could have a negative impact on the lives of the majority of women. Through her strategic choice of title then, Churchill relies on readily available cultural

symbols to demonstrate how throughout history Top Girls like other not so top ones, have been consigned to and kept in their male defined places.

In *Top Girls* Churchill has sixteen characters played by seven women to represent the different possibilities or lives a woman could live. It opens with the most famous dinner scene which was heralded as one of the most famous scenes in modern drama. It is also a scene of continuous excited conversation. It is set in a London restaurant where Marlene hosts a dinner party to celebrate her promotion as the managing director of 'Top Girls' employment agency. However it is her guests that are most interesting. They are five women from history, painting and fiction: Isabella Bird (1831- 1904) the adventurous nineteenth century Japanese traveller; Lady Nijo (b. 1258), the medieval Courtesan who became a Buddhist nun and travelled on foot through Japan; Dull Gret, who as Dulle Greit in a Bruegel painting led a crowd of women on a charge through hell; Pope Joan the ninth century female Pope and last, but not the least, Patient Griselda, an obedient wife out of Chaucer's Clerk's Tales. As the evening continues we become engrossed with the stories of all five women and the impending crises in Marlene's own life.

This assembling of historical women helps recounting the travels, intellectual accomplishments and the love affairs that have made them 'top girls'. These women also represent the different possibilities that a woman can hold in today's world and in the past. The theme is

briefed by Marlene who avers "We've all come a long way" (p.13) and toasts to the courage and the way these women have changed the lives of generations to follow.

Marlene can be said to represent the changing attitude women have for themselves and also the change towards them in the working place. She is a product of gender equality. She manages the scene quite well, from being a perfect hostess to ordering courses and drawing out her guests while adding her own comments on their individual stories. Her own story however raises many questions. She grew up in a struggling working class family, had a child when she was 17, but gave it to her sister Joyce, as she felt the child would hinder her professional life.

The first to arrive at the scene is Isabella Bird. The character of Isabella Bird has been taken from *A Curious Life for a Lady* by Pat Barr. Daughter of a clergyman she moved to live in Scotland. As a frail child, she was prescribed frequent outdoor excursions. However when she was 18, a fibrous tumour was discovered and she had to be operated upon. As a result she was bedridden for a time being. For her wellbeing, she was sent to Australia and from there to the Sandwich Islands. She fell in love with the sea, part of the reason being that she felt completely liberated, discovering "a new world"(p.8). She is in a sense a liberated woman as she rejects the proposal of Mr. Nugent – Rocky Mountain Jim- who proposed to her because she could "make scones and lasso cattle"(p.9).

She however gets married at fifty to Dr. Bishop who had a 'sweet character' and because she thought she owed it to him as he had tended to her sister in her last days. But she found marriage "an ordinary drudgery of life". She was ill again with "carbuncles on the spine and nervous prostration" (p.11) The adventurer in her resurfaces again with the death of her husband and she sets off to Tibet, as she feels dull when stationary. On first glance, Isabella Bird might appear liberated. At a time when women did not enjoy much freedom, she appears rather privileged. "My father taught me Latin although I was a girl."(p.3) and "I studied the metaphysical poets. I thought I enjoyed intellectual pursuits. " (p.3) She is widely travelled and tutored well. But in spite of these privileges, Isabella nonetheless is at heart more or less a conservative woman. Very soon she admits she had always "tried to do what (her) father wanted." (p.3). Then she strongly repudiates any suggestions that she was anything "other than feminine"(p.8). In response to Griselda's strange tale of marital perseverance, she says, "I swore to obey John, of course, but it didn't seem to arise. Naturally I wouldn't have wanted to go abroad while I was married." (p.21) Above all, she is guilty for having spent years in self gratification. To make up, she "hurled herself into committee work and wore herself out with good causes."(p.8).

The next to arrive on the scene is Lady Nijo (b. 1258) whose character is based on the character of Nijo in the autobiography, *The Confessions of Lady Nijo*. In this book Lady Nijo describes her life in

Japan between 1271 and1306. Her life's story is that of two halves- firstly at the court and later as a vagrant Buddhist nun. Over dinner, she unravels a very interesting tale of perusal and rejection. At fourteen, she was one of the maidens passing the sake at court when the Emperor who was aged twenty nine told her father to send her to him. She didn't want to go, but soon reconciled with the thought that she had been brought up for the Emperor. However what she could never reconcile with was taking other women to him, which was also a part of her role. "I never enjoyed taking other women to him" (p. 3), she regrets. Nijo came from a line of eight generations of poets; her father was a very religious man and a poet. On falling from the favour of the emperor, she entered holy orders just the way her father wanted her to. But she adopted religion as a kind of nothing as if she were dead already. As a nun she travelled the country on foot- she walked everyday for twenty years- following the tradition of priests, who were often vagrants. Her travels revealed her determined will. She had three lovers. One of them is the priest, Ariake. He dedicated his life to her. Nijo believed at first that the Emperor was of sweet character because he did not mind about Ariake, but soon comes to the realisation that it is rather because he no longer cared for her. One night he even sent to man to her and listened to their lovemaking from behind the screens. She depended on the Emperor's favour and was told to abandon the three layered gown, when she incurred his displeasure. She also remembers having some babies. Her first child was the Emperor's which died and the second was Akebano's, who had loved her ever since she was thirteen. On

the birth of the child, he took it away from her. She recollects with regret, "It was only a girl, but I was sorry to lose it" (p.16). She later has a chance to see her child who had been adopted by Akebono's wife and had been brought up to be sent to the palace, just as she herself had been. Her third child had been Ariake's and she felt nothing for the child.

Nijo also remembers an incident that makes her particularly angry. She was eighteen. At the full Moon Ceremony the men make special rice gruel and stir it with their sticks. They then beat their women across the lions so that they will bear sons, not daughters. The Emperor beat them hard, which was not exceptional, but on this occasion he allowed the attendants to beat them too. In response the ladies devised a plan to attack the Emperor and beat him in return. Nijo remembers with a sort of pleasure how she beat him with a stick until he promised he would not order anybody to hit them again. There was of course a great fuss afterwards and the nobles were horrified. This is Nijo's last, exultant memory. But Nijo's accomplishments in life were result of strict adherence to the wishes first of her father and then of the Emperor of Japan. She judges herself at the dinner party according to man-imposed standards, especially those of her father, even her decision to wander Japan as a penitent nun:

> Nijo: Oh, my father was a very religious man. Just before he died he said to me, "Serve His Majesty, be respectful, if you lose his favour enter holy orders."

Marlene: But he meant stay in a convent, not go wandering round the country.

Nijo: Priests were often vagrants, so why not a nun? You think I shouldn't / I still did what my father wanted.

(p.3)

Gret, true to her name, doesn't have much to say until the end, though she makes an early entrance. She is more preoccupied with the table and the meal than anything else. She eats crudely being a stranger to sophisticated surroundings and also steals bottles and plates when no one is looking. Her relative silence adds an element of suspense up to the point when she delivers her climatic, inspirational story derived from surrealistic painting by Bruegel. She describes coming to hell through a big mouth and finding it all black and red- very similar to her own village after it had been looted and fired by the soldiers. She set about beating and fighting these devils. "I'd had enough, I was mad, I hate the bastards. I come out my front door that morning and shout till my neighbours come out and I said, 'Come on, We're going where the evil come from and pay the bastards out.' And they all come out just as they was/ from baking or washing in their aprons, and we push through the street and the ground opens up and we go through a big mouth into a street just like ours but in hell." (p.28) Gret, waving a sword, led her women, running and fighting and gave the devils a beating.

Joan is the next to arrive and excites attention, having lived a most exciting life. As Churchill explains in her note on Characters, 'Pope Joan occupied a position which even to this day remains inaccessible to women. Disguised as a man she is thought to have been pope between 854 – 856." She was an infant prodigy interested in theology, metaphysics and the teachings of John the Scot. She left home at the age of twelve, dressed as a boy, with a sixteen year old friend. She left because being female she was denied access to the library. The two wanted to study in Athens and as it was impossible to do so as a woman, she decides to remain disguised. She went undiscovered and was recognised as very clever. Thereafter she went to Rome as Italian men do not have beards. She studied, obsessed with the pursuit of truth. Very soon she was made the Cardinal but she fell ill 'full of terror and regret.' However she soon recovered and studied in pursuit of the absolute. When Pope Leo died she was elected. She enjoyed being Pope, consecrating bishops and receiving royalty. Joan nonetheless in not devoid of the guilt that plagued others. When there were natural disasters, such as earthquakes or plagues, she felt personally responsible. She might have survived happily and successfully were it not for her baby. Here she was finally exposed as a woman and "Women, children and lunatics can't be Pope.'(p.15). So strong was her identification with the male sex that she was unable to interpret obvious signs of pregnancy. She hardly knew what was happening, not having actually lived a woman's life. She 'wasn't used to having a woman's body.' (p.16) There is a hint of irony, when later in the play Louise (whom the same actor plays) remarks

during her interview with Win, "I don't care greatly for working with women, I think I pass as a man at work"(p.52) "What is remarkable is Joan's lack of outrage against the vicious hegemony of the man centered government of the church."[12] Rather she even joins in the condemnation of herself and her sex, saying "I'm a heresy myself"(p.6). Her baby was eventually born during the procession of all the Roman clergy on Rogation Day. She experienced labour pains, spasms, contractions and loss of breath. By the time she realised what was happening it was too late. The people thought the pope was ill, but the baby just slid on to the road. One cardinal cried, 'The Antichrist!' and fainted. Joan was taken by the feet, dragged out of town, and stoned to death. The baby was also killed. Later the procession always avoided the street journeyed through on the fateful day. The clergy introduced a pierced marble chair in the Chapel of the Saviour to confirm the sex of the Pope. Two clergymen made sure he was a man while the Pope retained his public dignity.

Griselda is the last one to arrive and her story begins with her marriage. She was selected by the ruling marquis, Walter, when she was fifteen on the condition that she would always obey him. At first Walter was kind, but when her first child a daughter was born, Walter explained that the people were getting restless as the child was from a woman belonging to a peasant family. So she had to obediently give up the child. Four years later the act was repeated this time with a son. All the while Griselda never complained thinking it is a test of her love. But twelve

years later she was tested again as Walter decided he must marry someone who could give him an acceptable heir. Griselda was sent home, barefoot and dressed only in a slip. Her father and everyone else were crying but she was perfectly content. Very soon she was recalled to prepare a young beautiful girl of sixteen for marriage with Walter. Just as the feast was about to begin Walter stayed behind, put his arms around Griselda who almost felt asleep with shock and said 'this is your daughter and son.' Griselda fainted, then cried and kissed her children. Thus Griselda takes obedience to an absurd level and acquiesces to every command from her husband and master until she has been stripped of virtually everything: her daughter, her husband and even the clothes from her body. The guests are taken aback at Griselda's remarkable story. Like Joan, she defends the hand that oppresses her. Explaining her own reluctance to interfere when the daughter was taken from her, ostensibly to be killed, she says, "It was Walter's child to do what he liked with."(p.23). Marlene follows it with a particularly scathing comment on Walter and calls him a 'monster'. This forces Griselda to rethink 'I do think I do wonder – it would have been nicer if Walter hadn't had to.' (p.27)

It is interesting to note the dishes that each one orders. Their meal choices infact reveal their personalities. Isabella Bird orders chicken which is a popular Victorian dish and so is the dessert that she orders which is apple pie and cream. Lady Nijo orders Waldorf salad which though being exotic remains a side dish. It is symbolic of the concubine

status that Nijo occupied who like the salad was never the "main dish". Dull Gret orders potatoes, that appear dull like her but are also reliable and versatile like her. Pope Joan orders cannelloni which is an Italian dish. Most significant is the order placed by Marlene. She attempts to be recognized as a "male". Rare stake is traditionally a dish men prefer. The significance in Marlene ordering two of them is to illustrate that she can be more masculine than the traditional man. More interesting is the dessert that she orders i.e. profiteroles which is a French type of cream puff. She orders by saying, "I'd like profiteroles because they're disgusting" (p.31). It seems as if Marlene orders them to prove that she is not the one to be intimidated easily. She orders them because she can, not because she wants to. Griselda does not order anything for dinner but Marlene orders pudding for her dessert. Griselda submits to it who in life as well in choice of her meal doesn't have much say anyway.

Joseph Marohl shows how all the women at the dinner party are "able to detect areas of intolerance and sexual tyranny in the cultures of the other women present; their blind spots are the inequities of their own cultures." Joan is shocked at Griselda's servility, "I never obeyed anyone. They all obeyed me."(p.21) but she does not comprehend "how her own denial of her sex was also a concession to anti-feminist hegemony."[10] Isabella decries the superstition of the Church during Joan's lifetime, but she is ignorant that the Victorian woman's obsession with being a proper lady was another form of female subjugation. Marlene does not approve of

Nijo's acquiescence to her rape in the Emperor's palace, but later in the play she encourages a client to adapt herself to a certain professional image to please her male employers.

Nonetheless the depiction of these women on the stage was to say the least quite 'unusual'. In the past women characters have been presented almost exclusively as adjuncts to men, dependent on them and limited by the rules and conventions of a male dominated world. Their dramatic roles like their roles in real life were restricted as wives, daughters, lovers, harlots, always contingent on men, rarely permitted to act or think independently. In *Top Girls* as in *Owners*, modern woman is shown to be living at a time of shifting priorities and expectations. Female roles can be challenged. Churchill is original in presenting so many different kinds of women and more important she lets them speak for themselves. The characters are 'types' but they are also individualised and dramatically interesting.

However though it would appear that these women are emancipated, actually they are not. All of them have been expected to fulfil certain roles, regardless of their individual temperaments. And these roles have been determined for the convenience of men. The first act thus acts as an alienation effect which makes visible the trans- historical and trans- cultural nature of this oppression of women. Nijo and Griselda are essentially sexual slaves. Joan was forced to adopt a disguise to pursue

theology and poetry. She is perfectly acceptable as a Pope before the truth is found out. The lament, 'I shouldn't have been a woman' is thus understandable. She is not spared once her biology gives her away and is stoned to death. Isabella was expected to live the life of a clergyman's daughter and always felt guilty whenever she attempted to break free. "How can people live in this dim pale island and wear hideous clothes? I cannot and will not live the life of a lady... Why should I? Why should I?" (p.26). Marlene's awakening comes much later, when she sees her daughter sleeping in the office and acknowledges, after everything, very little has really changed in the world: "She's not going to make it." By the end of the scene, the guests have had time to ponder over their situations and what appears to be liberation at first glance, is proved to be otherwise. Now there is a feeling of resentment, boiling to a rage, which finds its finest expression in Gret's own feminist revolution:

> I'd had enough. I was mad. I hate the bastards. I come out of my front door that morning and shout till my neighbours come out and I said, 'Come on, we're going...'" (p.28)

Feminist themes introduced in the first act echo throughout the play. There is much "good humour, mutual congratulation and enjoyment among the group as might be expected."[i']. By the end the guests, mostly drunk, are lost in personal reminiscence, and while Isabella remembers her last triumph, Joan is actually being sick. The disintegration of the party is extremely ironic. Dull Gret's final apocalyptic vision of

collective action is set against the stage picture of a group of women no longer listening to each other.

How violence is used in patriarchy is best analyzed in *Top Girls*. The characters of the play illustrate the instances of suffering and exploitation of women through the ages. The descriptions of their lives consist of their achievements, but more of their being raped, deprived, and psychologically battered (Innes 464). The character Pope Joan, a legendary female, disguises herself as a man to be able to pursue a career and ends up serving as Pope of the Roman Catholic Church .However, she forgets what it feels like to be a woman until she gives birth to a child in public. She is stoned to death for having broken one of the patriarchal taboos and having become a pope which is one of the most precious status positions reserved for men. In Act 1, Scene 1, Joan recollects:

> "I was on the horse [...] And the baby just slid out onto the road.[...] They took me by the feet and dragged me out of the town and stoned me to death " (p.11).

Millett argues that, like other totalitarian ideologies, patriarchal ideology would be imperfect unless it had the rule of force as an ever-present intimidation. Patriarchy institutionalizes force through its legal system. Strict patriarchies back up the prohibition against illegitimacy or sexual autonomy with a death sentence. Needless to say, there is no penalty upon the male correspondent. Foucault, also, points out that if someone dares to

rise up against the hegemonic power and disobeys its laws, then direct force is exercised over the offender's life, which generally leads to the death penalty.

Top Girls is no doubt a play about women, who have defined their roles in life according to their individual perception of womanhood, but this anomaly is lost in the dynamism of the conversation. Even before the first act draws to a close, we are forced to question ourselves whether these women are indeed successful. Each woman's presence represents different female psyche and universalizes female experience. Collectively they provide an historical context for the new woman who is represented in the scene by Marlene. "History, which was traditionally dealt predominantly with men and been written by men, is here given a feminist perspective."[18]

As the play progresses, Marlene's history is revealed. She emerges as the New Woman. She is a perfect rebuttal to Gender Stereotyping. Marlene has accomplished much in her life, but not without the costs. She abandoned her child as she thought it would hinder her professional advancement. She is a woman who "refuses to be tyrannized and therefore has joined the powers- that- be and, like Pope Joan seeks to be obeyed rather than to obey."[19] Nijo uncovers the secret significance of the promotion to managing director when she adds the phrase "Over all the women you work with. And the men."(p.13). Marlene's advancement

helps no one but herself, however much she would like to believe and she endorses a hierarchical system oppressive to the less fortunate women and men in her society. Ironically the waitress in the first scene does not even have a voice. She stands in stark contrast to the other women. As she does not qualify as a 'Top Girl' she consequently must serve those who do. Remaining silent, she is a representative of the vast majority of ordinary women who silently struggle through poverty and face oppression every day of their life. In her effort to escape the oppressor and the phallocentric system, Marlene herself has become the oppressor. Her daughter Angie, appears quite disoriented and is stupid, lazy and frightened. Churchill is very clever in displaying the differences between the characters. If Marlene represents everything that is great about the 80s for women then Joyce her sister, represents everything that is bad about this time for women. If Marlene represents success, then ironically Angie her own daughter represents the other side of the coin.

Churchill does not fail to recognize and address the unique features of gender oppression to explore the commonalities in women's experience under the patriarchal systems. In an attempt to demonstrate the continuity of this oppression and to show how little has changed for women from the Rome of 854 to present day London, Churchill examines and challenges another of the inter-related elements of gender identified by Joan W. Scott "normative concepts that set forth interpretations of the meanings of the symbols that attempt to limit and contain their metaphoric possibilities...

that take the form of fixed binary opposition, categorically asserting the meaning of male and female, masculine and feminine."[20] Through the exploration of such normative concepts as mother, father, wife and husband, Churchill challenges gender stereotyping in an attempt to liberate the metaphoric possibilities of both feminity and masculinity.

Then it is the women's maternal experiences or lack thereof, that Churchill takes in order to challenge the gender stereotype of an inherent maternal instinct. Cherrs Kramaral and Paula A. Treicheer's Smazons, define maternal instinct as a concept "invented by males to ensure that we would fulfill our procreative duties as well as assuming full responsibilities for children per se.; Further on it is defined as 'natural' for women to want to give birth, to love their children and to be willing to sacrifice anything for their benefit."[20]

Of all the women in the play only Isabella Bird has not experienced childbirth. She equates children with horses revealing a decided preference for the latter. "I never had children. I was fond of horses." In contrast, Dull Gret exemplifies the maternal experience of a vast majority of women. Lady Nijo and Patient Griselda share a similar maternal experience: the loss of children to patriarchy. Nijo explains how motherhood for her has been a succession of pain and loss which finally culminates in total annihilation of all maternal feelings "My fourth child was Ariake's too --- It was a boy again, my third son. But oddly enough I

felt nothing for him." (p17) The fact that she finds this odd is itself telling and points to the fact that how completely Nijo has internalized the patriarchal ideology. Likewise Griselda justifies Walter's act of taking away the children again revealing the extent to which she has been interpellated by the patriarchal ideology that holds that children belong to their fathers. Pope Joan and Marlene on their part experience motherhood as nothing more than an inconvenience: Joan because she 'wasn't used to having a woman's body' and Marlene who procrastinates until it is too late to abort. Joyce mockingly reminds her "You was the most stupid for someone so clever, get yourself pregnant not to go to the doctor, not tell." (p.80) Through these maternal experiences, Churchill makes connections between having children stolen like Nijo and Griselda, to having children killed like Joan to having to choose between children and economic security like Marlene. For these top Girls then, motherhood becomes an oppressive experience, fraught with complexities and ambiguities impacted by social and economic realities.

Thus by the time the curtain draws to a close, one realizes that the play is less concerned with the celebration of successful women, but rather questions what kind of success is this. Benedict Nightingale recognised the central questions of the play:

> What use is female emancipation, Churchill asks, if it transforms the clever women into predators and does nothing for the stupid, weak and helpless? Does freedom, and feminism, consist aggressively

adopting the very values that have for centuries oppressed your sex?[21]

Angie is a helpless victim of this system. She is slow, lazy and stupid. Joyce knows that "She's not going to get a job when jobs are hard to get." While the successful look after themselves, there is no one to look after Angie. Similarly Mrs. Kidd highlights another dilemma of employment. She is quite out of place and uncomfortable in the office. She requests Marlene to give up her job which is quite unreasonable. She also explains how life has become even more difficult for her ever since her husband has been denied promotion. Here again the brunt of success of a select few is borne by another woman, a helpless victim.

The play ends on an unhappy note with Angie 'frightened' and looking for solace where there are no chances of her getting any. Thus whereas in the *Owners* it is the complete role-reversal that Churchill takes up, in *Top Girls* it is one of determining the pros and cons of women in society, especially in labour situations. Both the plays however were instrumental in demytholizing the myth of male and female roles and attributes.

Notes

1. Amelia Howe Kritzer, *The Plays of Caryl Churchill*(London: Macmillian 1991) 107.

2. W.E.C.Bigby, Contemporary English Drama (New York: Holmes and Meher Publishers Inc.,1981) 167.

3. Elaine Aston, *Caryl Churchill* (Plymoth: Northcote, 1997) 80.

4. Bigby. Op. cit., 114.

5. Caryl Churchill from an interview with Linda Simmons published in *File on Churchill* (London: Metheun, 1989) 89.

6. Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama 1890-1990* (London: Cambridge University Press 1992) 260-61.

7. Judith Thurman, "The Playwright who makes you laugh about Orgasm, Racism, Class Struggle, Homophobia, Woman-Hating, the British Empire and the Irrepressible Strangeness of the Human Heart" *Ms.* (May 1982) 56.

8. Caryl Churchill, *Owners*, (4th ed. 1973, rpt. London: Metheun,1985) 4. All subsequent quotations have been taken from the above edition and have been incorporated in the text.

9. Carl Degler, "Charlotte Perkins Gilman on the Theory and Practice of Feminism," *American Quarterly, VIII* (Spring 1956) 22-23.

10. Helene Cixous and Catherine Clement, *The Newly Born Woman* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1975) 110.

11. Michelene Wandor, *Look Back in Gender* (London: Metheun, 1987) 121.

12. Ibid 121.

13. Luce Irigray "Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*(London: Oxford University Press, 1981) 177.

14. Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynis Fainham, *Modern woman: The lost sex* quoted by William H. Chafe, *Woman and Equality* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977) 54.

15. Caryl Churchill, *Top Girls*,(London: Metheun,1982) 64. All subsequent quotations have been taken from the above edition and have been incorporated in the text.

16. Joseph Marohl "De-realised women: Performance and Identity in Churchill's *Top Girls*," *Contemporary British drama*, ed. Hersh zeifman (London:Macmillian 1993) 318.

17. Ibid; 319.

18. Bill Naismith, "Commentary," *Top Girls* (London:Methuen. 1982) xxiii

19. Ibid. xxiv.

20. Marohl, *Contemporary British drama*, op. cit., 320.

21. John scott, "Gender: A Useful Category Of Historical Analysis." American Historical Review 91 (Dec, 1986) 1067.

22. Blue Stockings and Crones: A feminist dictionary (London: Pandora, 1992)

Conclusion

Analyzing plays by five modern British playwrights, one finds different kinds of women portrayed in their works. The plays analyzed also show a pattern of development and change.

Alison on *Look Back in Anger* represents the traditional woman. She has moulded herself according to her husband's needs and his life-style and effaced her identity completely. Jimmy, the husband is a raging pugnacious bore, but the patriarchal system and the sexist society allow him to stand on a higher pedestal. There is clearly a war of the sexes going on, but it is a one sided affair as Alison just remains a dumb recipient. She is totally marginalized and is given no voice. This play reveals that aspect of traditional marriage, where wife is never treated as an equal partner and is deprived even of her individuality. She is treated as a possession and is considered a liability. Her voice is never heard and she is totally marginalized. Woman in this case also becomes the dust bin and the dumping ground, where the husband can dump in all his faults and then condemn them as hers. The ending of the play only serves to confirm Jimmy's male-chauvinistic attitude. Alison returns to the husband- a poor lost, suffering woman- and worst of all, begs forgiveness.

Arnold Wesker's *Triology* moves a step forward from this traditional male – chauvinist stand. The woman here is neither all that silent nor all that marginalized. In *Chicken Soup With Barley*, she rather appears to dominate, has a voice for her opinions and is on the helm of affairs. She is also exuberantly active and throbs with energy. Not ready to be confined to the boundaries of her home, she has moved out of the confines and participates in politics. All through it appears as if it is she who is dictating terms both inside and outside home thus proving true the feminist slogan "personal is political". In *Roots*, the woman discovers herself interestingly by finding her own voice and the moment she realizes it she takes a new birth. The final triumphant statement comes from the stage directions. *As Beatie stands alone, articulate at last, the curtain falls.* Thus whereas in plays like *Look Back in Anger* woman is not given any space, socialists like Wesker do give her some breathing space. But the ending of *Chicken Soup with Barley* again leaves one baffled and sad. Almost everybody raises questioning finger at Sarah. Her unflinching faith is now mocked at and she is shown to be an ignorant fool working with blind optimism. And though Beatie has found her voice she is never the less alone, desperately looking for some support which even her family refuses to give. Interaction, sharing and communication between the two sexes is still conspicuous by its absence. Partnership is absent and only sublimated conflict is apparent.

Each His Own Wilderness and *Play with a Tiger* are different as they come from a woman's pen. They are a sensitive portrayal of a woman's suffering, her agony and her final loneliness. The women characterized in the play are so called free woman as they do not have husbands to cater to. In *Each His Own Wilderness* both Myra and Milly are single. But if there are no husbands, then the sons take up the job of pestering, abusing and questioning the mother. Tony the son, approves neither of his mother's work nor her friends. What he demands vehemently for, is total allegiance from his mother. Towards the end Myra comes to the sad realization that it is impossible to appease him. Myra owns a house, runs it and has a genuine friendship with another woman, but she still has a shaky family base, no satisfying sexual relationship and sadly no appreciation for all her well meaning attempts. Hence by the time the play draws to an end one feels that realization of a woman's individuality is not possible while staying within the present family setup. *Play with a Tiger* was also an important play as it ~~was for it~~ shows anger, frustration and sexual drive as motive forces to be as strong in women as in men. And on the stage it was for the first time that anger and sexuality were accepted not only as attributes of realistic characters but also as sources of female power. It also focused on the premise that for men loving involves lies, hypocrisy and even secrecy, whereas women demand a basic honesty in the relationship.

The fourth playwright, Caryl Churchill's main contribution is to further the cause of feminists and broaden traditional views of gender roles. Through her plays *Owners* and *Top Girls* Churchill is successful in highlighting the arbitrariness of gender roles which are imposed on both sexes by patriarchy. Marion, the protagonist of *Owners,* is a completely liberated woman. A prosperous property dealer, she is fully in command of situations, events and people. She is in fact, every inch a replica of a successful business executive and an embodiment of all the masculine values upheld by the patriarchal system. She is capable of dictating terms both to her lover as well as her husband. Abounding in self interest and working for self gratification, she is cold, callous, commanding and decisive. It is thus that Churchill criticizes the arbitrary characterization of gender roles by reversing the conventional expectations of male/female; a completely passive male versus a very active female figure. It has been noted that another strategy that Churchill uses to manifest the arbitrary notion of gender roles is cross-casting, which challenges the assumptions that gender definitions are natural ramifications of physical difference. And what Churchill also attempts is to draw attention to the issue that women should and must avoid being trapped by essentialism in irrelevant categories like superwoman and this is beautifully done in both her plays taken up for analyses. She shows how it becomes the worst kind of oppression when one starts imitating the oppressor. What is needed on the other hand is the erasure of power-division and replacement of slavery, brutality and callousness with equality, sweetness, love and concern.

Thus in the five plays analyzed one finds different types of women. Alison the absolutely docile, subservient wife, is a dumb recipient; Sarah, Beatie and Anna are relatively more vocal; Myra and Milly are single and relatively more free, but are still bound to the sons and the extreme case is of Marion and Marlene who are ruthless and cruel but then also successful in the world of men.

Viewing these different kinds of women portrayed in these plays one can see that the total subservient position like that of Alison's does call for liberation. But surely the conduct of Marion or Marlene is not true liberation. These are women that are still trapped by the categories of patriarchal essentialism like superwoman, even while they are rejecting gender roles imposed on them. The damaging effects of masculinist organizational structures bite so hard that women feel they have to be better and work harder than men to achieve recognition. Therefore, they assert that they can do all and everything. Moreover, they claim that they are "free" and "equal" to men but they miss the point that these terms belong to the dominant male culture. Being equal to men requires internalizing patriarchal values and accepting male models of successes. As a result, women who are trying hard to cope with inequality through male modeling transform into superwomen, or surrogate men. They become oppressors of other women and men they deal with. This proves that their position is ironic because while trying to eliminate patriarchy,

they become a part of it. Thus true liberation can be achieved only when there is a healthy interaction between the two sexes and this can be achieved when power politics does not remain the basis of woman-man relationship.

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